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AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS.

AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS

AN HISTORICAL NOVEL

BY

GEORG EBERS

TRANSLATED BY

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FROM THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE ~~TO~~ THE
SECOND EDITION.

"Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetæ,
Aut simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitæ."

HORACE, *De Arte Poetica*, v. 333.

I CANNOT conceal from myself that there exists a large number of scholars who take it amiss if a student of science clothes the result of his researches in a fanciful garb. I partly agree with them, but the rapid sale of the first edition of this volume proves that the public is grateful to the scholar who does not disdain to make them acquainted with the results of his labour in the form which is most attractive to them. At all events, there are few methods better calculated to instruct and stimulate a large number of people than that which I have mentioned. Whoever takes up a scientific book already feels an interest in science, but perhaps some who seek amusement in the present volume will, when they lay it down, be induced to turn to a more learned work, and may even be won over to the study of antiquity.

We know little of the domestic life of the Greeks and Iranians before the Persian war (we are better acquainted with that of the Egyptians), so that even the most unpromising and learned historian of the private life of the civilized races of the sixth century B.C. would be obliged to seek the aid of the imagination. He might, however, escape the anachronisms which cannot be avoided by the author of a work such as I have undertaken. Industry and care are a safeguard against actual blunders; but I neither could nor would neglect the point of view of

the age and the country to which my readers and I belong. My work would have been not only unintelligible but devoid of interest to the modern reader if I had described purely ancient characters and conditions. The actors will therefore resemble Persians and Egyptians, but their words, more than their actions, will reveal the German author who cannot always rise superior to the sentimentality of his age, who was born in the nineteenth century after the birth of Christ, that great teacher whose words have exercised so mighty an influence on the feelings and thoughts of humanity.

I owe my thanks to Professor Lepsius, who pointed out to me that a description of Egyptian art alone would greatly fatigue the reader. I followed his advice, and even in the first edition I so arranged the material borrowed from Herodotus, that the reader is introduced to a Greek society, the characteristics of which will not be wholly foreign to him, a society with which he has something in common, namely, love of the beautiful and of art. He advances through this Greek forecourt, and enters Egypt duly prepared. He then proceeds to Persia and finally returns to the Nile. It is desired that he should feel an equal interest in all the races I have mentioned, and it is for this reason that I have not limited the story to one hero. I have tried to individualize the three nations by introducing striking representatives of each. I have, however, called my novel "An Egyptian Princess," because Nitetis' fate exercised a strong influence on the welfare of the other actors, so that she deserves to be looked on as the central figure.

In describing Amasis I have followed Herodotus' masterly account, the truth of which is confirmed by a picture of this king found on an ancient monument. I made use of Herodotus' account in drawing the traits underlying Cambyzes' character, and indeed the whole novel is based on the work of the great historian who lived but a few generations after the occurrence of the events narrated in this novel. I have not followed the "father of history," in every respect. In the development of the characters I pursued the course which is marked out by psychology, and I have everywhere made use of the hiero-

glyphic and cuneiform inscriptions. Certainly they confirm the account of the Halicarnassian in many respects. I have followed Herodotus in letting Bartja die after the conquest of Egypt, because I cannot agree with the usual translation of the inscription at Behistan. It runs as follows: "One Cambujiya by name, son of Curu, of our family, was formerly king here, and he had a brother, Bartiya by name, of the same father and mother as Cambujiya. *Hereupon* Cambujiya killed Bartiya." I cannot enter into linguistical discussions in this book, which is intended for the general public, but even the uninitiated must see that the word "*hereupon*" conveys no meaning in the above connection. The inscription agrees with Herodotus in other respects, and I think I can explain away the discrepancy between the account of the Halicarnassian and that of Darius, but I will reserve this for another place.

I have explained in the book (p. 39) why I have made Phanes the Halicarnassian, an Athenian; I might have avoided this misstatement in the first edition, but to do so now would be to completely alter the story. I must apologise for the means employed to make Nitetis very young, for in spite of the kindness of Amasis' disposition, which is praised by Herodotus, it seems very improbable that king Hophra lived twenty years after his fall. Still it is not impossible, for it can be proved that Amasis did not persecute the family of his predecessor. A certain Psamtik, who belonged to the fallen dynasty, lived on into the seventeenth year of Amasis' reign, a fact which is mentioned on a stele in the Leyden Museum, and died aged seventy-five.

I must add a few words regarding Rhodopis. Passages in the writings of Herodotus and other authors prove that she must have been a very remarkable woman. Her name, which means "rosy-cheeked," shows that she must have been beautiful. Herodotus particularly refers to her amiability. The fact that legend and tradition have done their utmost to immortalise her name, is the best proof of the high esteem in which she was held. Rhodopis, "as many say," built the most beautiful of the Pyramids (that of Mycerinus or Menkera) A story narrated by Ælian and Strabo, perhaps, forms the basis of our best and oldest fairy tale, "Cinderella," and a legend connected with her

presents some analogy to the story of the "Loreley." According to Ælian an eagle, according to Strabo the wind, carried off the shoes of Rhodopis when she was bathing in the Nile at Naucratis, and laid them at the feet of the king, who was pronouncing judgment in the market-place. He was so struck by the beauty of the sandals, that he did not rest till he had found the owner and made her his wife. It is said that a beautiful naked woman is enthroned on one of the Pyramids, and robs all travellers of their senses (*homines insanire faciat*) by her beauty. Her name is Rhodopis. Thomas Moore, who borrowed the legend from Zœga, made use of it in the following lines :

"Fair Rhodope, as story tells,
The bright, unearthly nymph who dwells
Mid sunless gold and jewels hid,
The Lady of the Pyramid."

These stories, in spite of their legendary nature, render it evident that Rhodopis was a remarkable woman. Some writers are too rash when they try to prove that the Thracian was the same as the beautiful, heroic Queen Nitocris, of whom Manetho, Eusebius, &c., speak, and whose name (victorious Neith) has been found on the monuments and refers to a queen of the sixth dynasty, but they strengthen the theory of our heroine's importance. Undoubtedly the legends told of the one belong to the other. Herodotus lived so short a time after Rhodopis, and the account he gives of her private life is so detailed and realistic, that we cannot look on her as a fabulous being. Darius' letter at the end of the book is intended to connect the Greek Rhodopis with the traditionary builder of the Pyramids. The former was called Doricha by Sappho. Perhaps that was her name before she was styled "the rosy-cheeked."

With regard to the love scenes between Bartja and Sappho, I cannot deny that the question has arisen: "Did the ancients know love in our acceptance of the term, or is this a product of Christianity?" The motto which I attached to the preface of the first edition shows that I had experienced similar doubts.

"It has often been remarked that there are undeniable

traces of modern sentimentality contained in the letters of Cicero and Pliny the younger. To me they seem only the utterances of that deep feeling which is the lot of all sorrowing hearts in every age, and in every race."—Alexander v. Humboldt.

I entirely agree with our great master of science, and I should like to point out that we possess love stories written by heathens. I will only mention "*Amor and Psyche*" by Apuleius. Love was not unknown to antiquity. Are there any finer representations of strong passion than those which we find in Sappho's poems? Where is there a nobler picture of patient love than that which Homer shows us in Penelope? Where can we find a finer instance of the faithful union of two hearts, even in death, than that which Xenophon has preserved in the story of Panthea and Abradatas, or than that of the Gaul Sabinus and his wife in the time of Vespasian? Do we know a more refined story than that of the halcyons (kingfishers) who are so attached to each other that when the male is paralyzed by age, the female bears him on her wings wherever he wishes to go? The gods reward such love, and when the pair builds its nest and hatches its young, the winds and waves are hushed, and the sun shines brightly during these "halcyon days." Can love stories be said to be wanting when a voluptuary like Antony desires in his will, that wherever he may die, his body is to be placed beside that of his beloved Cleopatra? Can we say that the chivalry of love is unknown, in a land where Queen Berenice's beautiful hair was made a constellation? Can we say that a nation was incapable of sacrifices for love, when we see it waging terrible wars with bitter obstinacy for this cause? The Greeks had an insult to avenge, but the Trojans fought for the possession of Helen, for "the old men of Ilion are willing to bear suffering for the sake of such a woman." Does not Theocritus' poem "*The Sorceress*," settle the whole question? The poor deserted girl crouches with her old nurse, Thestylis, before the fire, over which a wryneck sits in its wheel, for it is said to possess the power of bringing back the faithless Delphis. An Assyrian taught Simaitha the arts of magic, and she tries them all. The distant roar of

the sea, the smoking fire, the dogs howling in the streets, the tortured, restless bird, the old servant, the broken-hearted girl, the horrible implements of magic, all these form a weird scene, the influence of which is heightened by the calm, cold moonlight. Now the old woman leaves the girl and Simaitha ceases her incantations, lets her tears flow, and raises her eyes to Selene, the moon, the silent confidant of lovers, and tells her all that has taken place, how she saw handsome Delphis, and how her heart was filled with love for him.

The love of the creature for its creator, of mankind for the Deity, are the sublime gifts of Christianity. The command to love our neighbour created the idea of love for humanity, nay, humanity itself, an idea unknown to heathen nations, who knew no higher goal than love of their native town and their country. Christianity undoubtedly had a good influence on the love between man and woman, but we can believe that a Greek loved with the same intensity of feeling as a Christian. The ancients also resembled us in this, that a heart filled with love and longing was deeply influenced by nature.

These words seemed necessary to meet the objections of those who declare that a love like that of Sappho and Bartja was unknown to the ancients, though I grant that such strong love was more exceptional in their days than in our own. In conclusion, I must confess that I have probably painted the two in too glowing colours. But why may I not claim the license of the poet in a poetical description?

The notes will show that I have not taken this liberty in other cases. These notes seemed necessary partly to explain the less known names, partly to justify the author in the eyes of scholars.¹

¹ The notes have been greatly curtailed in the translation. Those only have been retained which seemed necessary for the elucidation of the text. Reference notes, and those intended to prove the author's statements, have been omitted, as Professor Ebers' name is a sufficient guarantee for the correctness of his facts.—TRANS.

FROM THE PREFACE TO THE FOURTH
EDITION.

While correcting the proofs of the third edition I was preparing for a journey to the Nile. I look back on my stay in Egypt in 1872-73 with special satisfaction, for by a fortunate accident I was enabled to find many new treasures, among them one of incomparable value, the great hieratic manuscript now preserved in the Leipsic Museum, and bearing my name. Ebers' papyrus, the second largest and the best preserved of all the documents of ancient Egypt still extant, was written in the sixteenth century B.C., and its 110 pages contain the hermetic book on the medicinal remedies of the old Egyptians, which was known to the Greeks of Alexandria. The god Thoth (Hermes) is called the guide of the physician, and the various treatises which compose this book are revelations from the deity. In this ancient scroll diagnoses are drawn up and remedies prescribed for the external and internal diseases affecting most parts of the human body. The numbers referring to the weights and measures are attached to each drug. The prescriptions are accompanied by texts which the physician is to repeat while making up the medicine, and while administering it to his patient. The second line of the first page describes the document as coming from Sais. One long chapter is devoted to the optic nerve. The book on the eye begins page 55, line 20, and fills eight long pages. Till now we were obliged to refer to Greek and Latin authors for information regarding the oculistic knowledge of the Egyptians. The Papyrus Ebers is the sole Egyptian work from which we can learn anything regarding this branch of medicine among the ancients.

These words seem out of place in the preface to a novel, but the subject deserves mention here. Is it not remark-

able that it was reserved for the author of "An Egyptian Princess" to discover this document? The reader will find an oculist from Sais among the characters in the book, who writes a work treating of diseases of the eye. The fate of this valuable work has an important bearing on the events of the story. The scroll of the oculist of Sais, which till now existed only in the imagination of the author and of the readers of "An Egyptian Princess," has become a reality. I am like the man who discovered on the road the treasure of which he had dreamed.

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AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS.

CHAPTER I.

RHODOPIS.

THE Nile had overflowed its banks. An immense expanse of water extended on all sides where usually luxuriant fields and blooming gardens were to be seen. The gigantic temples and palaces of the towns, which were protected by dykes, the roofs of the villages, and the tops of the tall palms and acacias alone were visible above the flood. The branches of the sycamores and plantains hung low in the water, while the tall, white poplars with their upturned boughs seemed endeavouring to avoid all contact with it. The full moon had risen and shed its mild rays on the Libyan Heights, that were seen against the western horizon. Blue and white lotus-flowers floated on the surface of the water. Bats of every description glided and flitted through the calm night air, fragrant with the scent of the blossoming acacias and jessamine. Wild pigeons and other birds slumbered in the tree-tops, while pelicans, storks, and cranes cowered on the bank, protected by the green papyrus reeds and other plants which grew there. The former tucked their heads with their long bills under their wings during their sleep, and did not stir; but the cranes started every time the stroke of an oar or the song of the busy boatman was heard, and peered into the distance, turning their slender necks anxiously from side to side. There was not a breath of wind, and the reflection of the moon, which floated like a silver shield on the surface of the water, showed that the Nile, which leaps wildly over the cataracts and rushes swiftly past the gigantic temples

of Upper Egypt, had given up its impetuous career, and adopted a tranquil course where it approached the ocean by means of different branches.

On this moonlight night, 598 years before the birth of our Saviour, a bark passed over the Canopic mouth of the Nile, which was almost free from currents. An Egyptian sat on the high roof of the upper deck, and from his post directed the long pole of the rudder. In the boat itself, half-naked men sang as they performed their task. In the open cabin, which resembled a wooden bower, two men lay on low cushions. They were evidently not Egyptians. Even the moonlight betrayed their Greek origin. The elder, an unusually tall and powerful man of about sixty, whose thick grey locks fell carelessly on his thick-set neck, and who wore a simple cloak, looked gloomily at the stream, while his companion, a slender, well-built man, perhaps twenty years his junior, gazed at the sky, called out to the steersman, threw his beautiful deep violet chlamys¹ into fresh folds, or busied himself with the arrangement of his scented brown locks or delicately curled beard.

About half-an-hour before, the boat had sailed from Naucratis,² the only Greek port in ancient Egypt. The gloomy, grey-haired man had not spoken a word during the whole journey, and the younger man had left him to his own reflections. When the boat approached the shore, the restless traveller raised himself and said to his companion: "We shall arrive at our destination directly, (Aristomachus) That pleasant house yonder to the left, in the garden full of palms, which rises above the flooded fields,³ is the residence of my friend (Rhodopis.) Her deceased husband

¹ The chlamys was a light summer cloak, generally made of costly material, which was worn chiefly by the elegant Athenians. The simple cloak, the himation, was worn by the Doric Greeks, especially by the Spartans.

² North-west of the Nile delta, in the district of Sais. The Greeks fortified the town. Alexander selected the neighbourhood of the town for the site of Alexandria.

³ The story opens in October, when the Nile is already sinking. The water rises gradually in the beginning of June, it increases in speed between the 15th and 20th July, and attains its highest point at the beginning of October. It rises once more after it has begun to sink, and then falls, first gradually, then with increasing rapidity, and reaches its lowest point in May.

Charaxus built it, and all her friends, even the king himself, are eager to furnish it with new improvements every year. Quite unnecessary. Though they bring hither all the treasures of the world, the fairest ornament of the house will always be its glorious mistress."

The old man raised himself, cast a hasty glance at the building, arranged with his hand the thick, grey beard that surrounded his chin and cheeks, but not his lips, and said abruptly, "You think so much of this Rhodopis, Phanes. Since when do Athenians praise old women?" His companion smiled, and replied complacently: "I think I am a good judge of mankind, and especially of woman-kind, and I can assure you that I know no nobler being in all Egypt than this matron. When you have seen her and her fair grandchild, and have heard your favourite songs sung by a splendidly trained chorus of slaves, you will, I am certain, thank me for having brought you hither."

"Nevertheless," answered the Spartan, gravely, "I should not have followed you, if I had not hoped to meet Phrixus the Delphian."

"You will meet him. I expect, too, that the singing will do you good, and rouse you from your gloomy brooding."

Aristomachus shook his head and answered: "The songs of home may cheer you, you light-hearted Athenian, but when I hear the songs of Alcman,¹ I shall feel as I do during those nights which I spend in waking dreams. My longing will not cease, it will be intensified."

"Do you think," asked Phanes, "that I do not yearn for my beloved Athens, for the playground of my youth, the busy life of the market? Truly, I too dislike the bread of exile, but it is made more palatable by intercourse such as this house offers; and when I hear my beloved Greek songs beautifully sung, my home appears to me in spirit, I see its olive and pine groves, its cool emerald rivers, its blue ocean, its gleaming towns, its snowy peaks and marble halls, and a tear of mingled joy and sorrow rolls down my cheek when the music ceases, and I awaken to the fact that I live in Egypt, in this hot, strange, monotonous land, which,

¹ The poet Alcman lived about 650 B.C. in Sparta. He was the son of a Lydian slave, was freed by his master Agesides, and obtained the rights of citizenship in Sparta.

thanks be to the Gods, I shall soon leave. But, Aristomachus, would you avoid the oasis of the desert, because presently you will have to journey through the sand again, in want of water? Would you flee from the happiness which an hour may bring, because sad days await you? But stay! We have arrived. Look cheerful, my friend, for it is not meet to enter the temples of the Charites with a sad heart.”¹

As he spoke the boat stopped at the wall of the garden, which was washed by the Nile. The Athenian leapt lightly from the boat; the Spartan left it with heavy but firm tread. Aristomachus had a wooden leg, but he walked as firmly by the side of light-footed Phanes, as if he had been born with it.

Rhodopis’ beautiful garden was full of sweet-scented flowers, insects buzzed on all sides. Acanthus, red pomegranates, hedges of guelder roses, jessamine and lilac, roses, and bushes of laburnum, grew close together; high palms, acacias, and balsam plants rose above the shrubs; great bats hovered over all with delicate wings, and song and laughter were heard on the stream.

An Egyptian had laid out this garden, and the builders of the pyramids had for ages been celebrated for their skill as gardeners. They knew how to lay out the beds neatly, to plant regular groups of trees and bushes, to arrange canals and fountains, bowers, and summer-houses; they even fenced in the paths with artificially cut hedges, and bred glittering fish in stone basins.

Phanes stopped at the gate of the garden wall, looked round attentively, and listened. Then he shook his head, and said, “I cannot understand what it means. I hear no voices, I see no lights; all the boats are gone, and yet the flag flutters on the coloured staff beside the obelisks on each side of the gate. Rhodopis must be absent. Can they have forgotten?” He had not finished, when he was interrupted by a deep voice: “Ah, the captain of the body guard.”

“Good evening to you, Cnacias,” cried Phanes in a pleasant voice, to the old man who came towards him. “How is it that this garden is as silent as an Egyptian

¹ The Goddesses of Grace, better known by their Roman names of the Graces (Aglaiä, Thalia, Euphrosyne).

tomb, while I see the flag of reception flutter? Since when does the white flag invite guests in vain?"

"Since when?" answered the old slave of Rhodopis, laughing. "As long as the (Parcæ) graciously spare my mistress, the old flag is sure to bring hither as many guests as the house can hold. Rhodopis is not at home, but will return soon. The evening was so beautiful that she and all her guests decided on an excursion on the Nile. They sailed two hours ago at sunset, and the meal is already prepared.¹ They cannot be absent much longer. I entreat you not to be impatient, Phanes, but to follow me to the house. Rhodopis would not pardon me if I did not persuade so dear a friend to remain. Stranger," he continued, addressing the Spartan, "I beg most heartily that you will stay, for as a friend of her friend, you will be very welcome to my mistress."

The two Greeks followed the servant and sat down in an harbour.

Aristomachus looked at the moonlit scene around him and said: "Tell me, Phanes, by what good fortune was it brought about, that Rhodopis, a former slave and hetæra, lives like a queen, and receives her guests in regal fashion?"

"I have long expected this question," answered the Athenian; "I am glad that, before you enter this woman's house, I can make you acquainted with her past. I did not wish to force you to listen to a story while we were on the Nile. With a power we cannot explain, the old stream constrains us to meditate in silence. When I rowed on the Nile at night for the first time, as you have just done, I too felt as though my usually restless tongue were paralysed."

"I thank you," answered the Spartan. "When I was in Crete, I saw for the first time Epimenides of Cnossus,² who is 150 years old; his age and sacred character caused a strange shudder to pass over me. How much older, how much holier is this ancient stream Aigyptos?³ Who can resist its spell? But tell me about Rhodopis."

¹ The chief meal, the Deipnon, was generally taken late.

² Priest of Zeus at Cnossus. According to Pliny he lived to be 209 according to Xenophanus of Colophon, 156 years old.

³ The Greek name for the Nile.

"When Rhodopis was a child," began Phanes, "she was carried off by Phœnician sailors, as she was playing with her companions on the Thracian shore, and was brought to Samos, where Iadmon a geomore¹ bought her. The little girl became more beautiful, more graceful, more intelligent every day, and soon gained the love and admiration of all who knew her.

"Æsop, the writer of fables, who was also a slave of Iadmon at that time, was particularly delighted with the child's grace and intelligence. He instructed her in everything, and gave her as much attention as though he were a Pedagogus, such as we Athenians keep for our boys. The good master found an obedient, intelligent pupil, and in a short time the little slave spoke, sang, and played with more skill and greater charm than the sons of Iadmon, who received most careful instruction. Rhodopis was so beautiful and accomplished, that the jealous wife of Iadmon would not allow the girl to remain in her house any longer, and the reluctant Samian was obliged to sell his favourite to a certain (Xanthus). At that time Samos was still governed by nobles, who were not very wealthy. If Polycrates had already been at the helm, Xanthus need not have felt any anxiety about purchasers. These tyrants fill their treasuries as magpies their nests. As it was, he went to Naucratis with his treasure, and here he gained large sums through the charms of his slave. In those days Rhodopis spent three years of the deepest degradation, on which she looks back with horror. When, at last, her beauty was celebrated in all Greece, and strangers came to Naucratis from far and wide for her sake, it came to pass that the people of Lesbos exiled their nobles, and chose Pittacus the wise, as ruler. The noblest families were obliged to leave Lesbos, and fled to Sicily, to Magna Græcia, or to Egypt. Alcæus,² the greatest poet of his time, and Charaxus, the brother of Sappho,³ the

¹ The native nobles of Samos.

² Alcæus, a friend of Sappho, and a member of one of the noblest Lesbian families, ranks among the chief lyric writers of antiquity.

³ Sappho was a contemporary of Pittacus, Alcæus, and Rhodopis; she was probably born at Mytilene, in Lesbos, about 620 B.C. She must have belonged to a noble family, as she and her brother were exiled by

writer of those odes, which it was Solon's last wish to learn, came hither to Naucratis, which had long flourished as the port whence Egypt carried on intercourse with the rest of the world. Charaxus saw Rhodopis, and soon loved her so deeply that he paid an enormous sum to buy her from Xanthus, who wished to return home. Sappho scoffed at her brother and his bargain in sarcastic lines, but Alcæus took Charaxus' part and sang Rhodopis' praise in glowing verse. The brother of the poetess, who had been lost sight of among the strangers in Naucratis, suddenly became famous through Rhodopis. All strangers assembled in his house for her sake, and overwhelmed her with gifts. King Hophra,¹ who had heard much of her beauty and intelligence, summoned her to Memphis, and wished to buy her from Charaxus; but he had long ago secretly given her her freedom, and loved her far too much to wish to part from her. Rhodopis also loved the handsome Lesbian, and preferred to remain with him in spite of the splendid offers which were made her on all sides. At last Charaxus made the wonderful woman his lawful wife, and lived with her, and her little daughter Clëis, in Naucratis, till Pittacus recalled the exiles.

"Then he and his wife went to Lesbos. He fell ill on the journey, and died soon after his arrival in Mitylene. Sappho, who had laughed at her brother because of his marriage with an inferior, soon became an enthusiastic admirer of the beautiful widow, and she vied with Alcæus in singing her praises in poems full of deep feeling.

"After the death of the poetess, Rhodopis returned to Naucratis with her little daughter, and was received there like a divinity.

"Amasis, the present king of Egypt, had meanwhile possessed himself of the throne of the Pharaohs, which he kept with the help of the soldiers to whose caste he belonged. As his predecessor, Hophra, had hastened his own downfall by means of his preference for the Greeks, and his intercourse with strangers, who were hated by all Egyptians, and had caused the people, especially the priests and

Pittacus. Most of the stories told about her may be dismissed as fictions.

¹ Hophra reigned 588-569 B.C.

soldiers to revolt openly, everyone felt certain that Amasis would close the land against all strangers as had formerly been the case, that he would dismiss the Greek mercenaries and listen to the commands of the priests instead of to the advice of the Greeks. Well, you see yourself, that the wise Egyptians made a mistake in their choice of a king, and fell from Scylla into Charybdis. If Hophra was a friend of the Greeks, Amasis can be called our lover. The Egyptians, and above all the priests and soldiers, are furious, and would like to massacre every one of us, as Odysseus massacred the suitors who wasted his property. The king does not care much about the soldiers, because • he knows the relative merits of the Greeks and Egyptians; but he is obliged to bestow a certain amount of consideration on the priests, for on the one hand, they have unlimited influence on the people, and on the other hand, the king clings, more than he cares to acknowledge, to the absurd religion, which has existed unchanged in this strange land for thousands of years, and is, therefore, doubly dear to those who profess it. These priests render Amasis' life a burden, persecuting and injuring us in every possible way; indeed, I should have been dead long ago, if the king had not extended his protection to me. But I am digressing. Rhodopis was, as I said, received at Naucratis with open arms, and overwhelmed with favours by Amasis, who became acquainted with her. Her daughter Clëis, who, like Sappho now, was never allowed to take part in the assemblies held every evening at Rhodopis' house, and was brought up almost more strictly than the other maidens of Naucratis, married Glaucus a rich Phœnician merchant of noble birth, who had bravely defended his native town against the Persians. She followed him to the newly-founded town, Massilia,¹ on the Celtic coast. The young people fell victims to the climate of that country after the birth of a daughter, Sappho. Rhodopis undertook the long journey to the west herself, fetched the young orphan, took her to live with her, brought her up most carefully, and now that she is grown up, refuses to allow her any

¹ Marseilles, founded about 600 B.C. by Phocæans. Phœnician factories may have existed on the site of the town at an earlier date.

intercourse with men, for she feels the shame of her youth so acutely that she keeps her grandchild more secluded from all contact with our sex than is customary in Egypt. With Sappho this is no difficult task, whilst social intercourse is as necessary to Rhodopis as water to a fish, air to a bird. All strangers visit her, and whoever has once tasted her hospitality will never be absent, if his time permits, when the flag announces a reception. Every Greek of any importance frequents this house, for here consultations are held as to how the hatred of the priests is to be met, and how we shall persuade the king to do this or that. Here you will learn the latest news from home and the rest of the world, here the fugitive finds an unassailable refuge, for the king has given his friend the right of asylum against the police. Here you will hear the language and songs of home, here we consult as to how Hellas is to be freed from growing tyranny.¹ This house is, in a word, the centre of all Greek interest in Egypt, and it possesses greater political importance than even the Hellenion.² In a few minutes you will see this wonderful grandmother, and perhaps, if we remain alone, the grandchild. You will understand that these people owe everything, not to luck, but to their own merit. Ah! there they are. Now they approach the house. Do you hear the songs of the women slaves? Now they enter. Let them sit down first, then follow me, and when we leave, I will ask you if you regret having come with me, and whether Rhodopis is not more like a queen than a freed slave."

Rhodopis' house was built in Grecian style. According to our ideas the exterior of the long one-storied house would be called simple, while in the interior, the arrangements combined Hellenic beauty of style with splendid Egyptian colouring. Through the wide portal one could see into the hall, on the left of which was a large banqueting-room, which looked on the river. On the opposite side was the kitchen, a room which was only to be found in the houses of the rich Greeks, while the poor

¹ A short time before our story commences, several ambitious Greeks, such as Pisistratus of Athens and Polycrates of Samos, had succeeded in overthrowing the nobles and seizing the government.

² A kind of Hanseatic league.

prepared their meals at the hearth in the ante-room. The reception-room was at the entrance of the hall: it was a square, surrounded by a peristyle, on which several rooms opened. In the midst of the hall, which was the apartment of the men, on an altar-like hearth of rich Æginetan metal-work, burnt the fire of the house.

In the daytime this room was lighted by means of a large opening in the roof, through which at the same time the smoke of the fire escaped. A passage on the other side of the entrance-hall, closed by a strong door, led into the large women's apartment, which was surrounded by pillars on three sides, and in which the women of the house were accustomed to be when they were not sitting at spindle or loom in the room by the garden or back door, as it was called. Between these rooms and the apartments on the right and left of the women's apartment, which served as domestic offices, were the bedrooms, in which the treasures of the house were also kept. The walls of the men's apartment were painted a reddish-brown, against which the white marble statues, the gift of an artist of Chios, stood out in bold relief. The floor was ornamented with mosaics of beautiful workmanship and colour. Along the pillars were ranged low couches covered with leopard skins; while near the artistic hearth, stood curiously-formed Egyptian armchairs, and small, delicately-carved tables of thya wood,¹ on which lay various musical instruments, such as flutes, cithara, and phorminx. Numerous lamps of different shapes, filled with kiki oil, hung on the walls: one represented a dolphin, who breathed forth fire; another a strange winged monster, from whose jaws streamed flames. The light that they gave mingled pleasantly with the fire of the hearth.

Several men stood in the hall, who differed both in their general appearance and in their dress. A Phœnician from Tyre, in a long, plum-coloured garment, was holding an animated conversation with a man whose sharply-cut features and curly black hair betrayed his Hebrew origin. He had come from his home to Egypt in order to buy Egyptian

¹ A valuable wood from the oasis of Jupiter Ammon, in the Libyan desert.

horses and chariots—the most renowned in those days¹—for the king of Judah, Zerubbabel. Three Greeks from Asia Minor who stood beside him clad in the costly garments of their Milesian home, were engaged in serious conversation with Phryxus, the simply-dressed ambassador of the town of Delphi, who was visiting Egypt in order to collect money for the temple of Apollo. Ten years ago the ancient Pythian sanctuary had become a prey to the flames, and a new and more beautiful building was to be erected in its stead.

Two of the Milesians, pupils of Anaximander and Anaximenes,² had come to the Nile to study astronomy and Egyptian lore in Heliopolis. The third was a rich merchant and shipowner, Theopompus by name, who had taken up his residence at Naucratis. Rhodopis herself was talking with much interest to two Greeks from Samos, the celebrated architect, worker in metal, sculptor, and goldsmith, Theodorus, and the writer of iambic verse, Ibycus of Rhegium,³ who had left the court of Polycrates for a few weeks in order to become acquainted with Egypt, and to bring the king presents from their master. Close to the hearth, a stout man with well-marked, sensual features, Philoinus, from Sybaris,⁴ lay at full length on the coloured fur cover of a double chair, and played with his scented locks, in which gold was twined, and with the gold chains which fell from his neck on to the saffron robe that reached to his feet.

Rhodopis had a pleasant word for everyone; but at the present moment she was giving her whole attention to the celebrated Samians. She was speaking to them of art and poetry. The eyes of the Thracian woman glowed with the fire of youth, her tall figure was full and upright, her well-shaped head was still surrounded by ample waves of grey

¹ Solomon bought horses and chariots in Egypt 1000 B.C. (2 Chron. i. 16-17).

² Anaximander of Miletus, 611-546, a celebrated geometrician, astronomer, philosopher, and geographer. He drew the first map on bronze, and introduced a kind of clock into Greece. Anaximenes, 570-500, was also a natural philosopher of Miletus.

³ Lived in the middle of the sixth century, B.C. Schiller's ballad, "The Cranes of Ibycus," has made the story of his murder well known.

⁴ A town in southern Italy famous for its luxury.

hair, which was gathered at the back into a net of delicately-woven gold; a glittering diadem adorned her lofty brow. Her noble Greek face was pale, but beautiful and unfurrowed, in spite of her advanced age. Her small mouth, still well shaped, her large, thoughtful, gentle eyes, her noble brow and nose would have adorned a maiden.

Rhodopis looked much younger than she really was, and yet she did not conceal her age. Matronly dignity was visible in her every movement, and her grace was not the grace of youth which seeks to please, but the grace of age which desires to be amiable, which gives and expects consideration.

Our friends now entered the hall; all turned towards them, and when Phanes appeared, leading his friend by the hand, he received a very hearty welcome, while one of the Milesians exclaimed: "I did not know what was wanting. Now it has suddenly dawned upon me; there can be no pleasure without Phanes."

Philoinus, the Sybarite, exclaimed, in a deep voice, without altering his position, "Joy is a pleasant thing, and if you bring it with you I, too, bid you welcome, Athenian."

"I welcome you heartily," cried Rhodopis, advancing towards her new guests, "if you are in good spirits, and not less heartily if trouble oppresses you. I know no greater pleasure than to smooth the forehead of a friend. You too, Spartan, I call my friend, for thus I call all who are dear to my friends."

Aristomachus bowed silently; but the Athenian exclaimed, while he turned partly to the Sybarite, partly to Rhodopis: "Well, then, my dear friends, I shall be able to content you both. You, Rhodopis, shall have a chance of comforting me, your friend, for I must soon leave you and your house; but you, Sybarite, shall rejoice in my gladness, for at last I shall see my beloved Hellas again, and can leave, though with reluctance, this golden mouse-trap of a country."

"You are going away? You have been dismissed? Where do you intend to go?" was asked on all sides.

"Patience, patience, friends," cried Phanes; "I must tell you a long story, which I will reserve for the banquet.

Besides, dear friend, my hunger is almost as great as my grief at leaving you."

"Hunger is a fine thing," said the Sybarite, philosophically, "if you are able to look forward to a good meal."

"You may set your mind at rest, Philoinus," answered Rhodopis. "I ordered the cook to do his best, and told him that the most exacting man of the richest town in the whole world, a Sybarite, Philoinus, would criticize his dainty dishes severely. Go, Cnacias, and bid them serve the meal. Are you content now, you discontented people? Wicked Phanes, you have spoilt my appetite with your bad news."

The Athenian bowed, the Sybarite continued his philosophical remarks. "Content is a fine thing when you have the means with which to satisfy your wishes. I must thank you, Rhodopis, for the homage which you pay to my unrivalled home. What says Anacreon?¹

To-day is what affects me,
Who can to-morrow know?
So quaff your wine, while yet 'tis fine,
And shake the dice and throw.
And unto cheerful Bacchus your full libations pour,
Ere some disease your body seize,
And bids you drink no more.²

"Well, Ibycus, have I correctly quoted your friend, who feasts with you at the table of Polycrates? I can assure you, that though Anacreon may make better verses than I do, my humble self does not understand life less well than the great artist of life. In all his songs there is nothing said in praise of food, and eating is more important than gambling and love, although these two occupations—I mean gambling and love—are very dear to me. I must die without food, but I can live, though miserably enough, without gambling and love."

The Sybarite, pleased with his shallow joke, burst out laughing. While the others continued talking in the same strain, the Spartan turned to the Delphian, Phryxus, drew

¹ Anacreon of Teos was living at Polycrates' court at the time of our story.

² Anacr. fragm. ed. Mœbius, xv. Translated by J. Barwick Hodge, Esq.

him into a corner, and forgetting his usual composure, asked him, in great excitement, whether he brought the answer from the oracle, which he had so long yearned for. The grave face of the Delphian brightened; he put his hand into the breast folds of his chiton,¹ and drew out a little scroll of sheep skin, like parchment, and on which several lines were inscribed.

The hands of the brave, strong Spartan trembled as he seized the little scroll, opened it, and eagerly scanned the writing which covered it. He stood thus for a short time, then he shook his grey head discontentedly, gave the scroll back to Phryxus, and said, "We Spartans learn other arts than those of reading and writing. Read, if you can, what Pythia says."

The Delphian glanced at the lines, and answered, "Rejoice, Loxias² promises you a happy return home. Hear what the priestess says:—

When from the snow-clad heights descend the men in their armour
Down to the shores of the winding stream which waters the valley,
Then the delaying boat shall conduct you unto the meadows,
Where the peace of home is to the wanderer given.
When from the snow-clad heights descend the men in their armour,
Then what the judging five have long refused shall be granted."

The Spartan listened eagerly to the words. He asked Phryxus to read them once more, then he repeated them by heart, thanked Phryxus, and put away the little scroll. The Delphian joined in the general conversation; the Spartan murmured to himself the words of the oracle so that he might not forget them, and tried to fathom the meaning of the mysterious words.

¹ A loose under-garment.

² Name of Apollo, given to him because of his vague, mysterious oracles.

CHAPTER II.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES.

THE folding doors of the dining-room opened. On either side of the entrance stood a beautiful, fair-haired boy, with myrtle wreaths in his hand; in the middle of the hall stood a long, low, highly-polished table, on each side of which were placed purple couches, which invited the guests to comfortable repose.

Splendid flowers decorated the table. Great joints, glasses and dishes full of dates, figs, pomegranates, melons, and grapes, stood beside small beehives full of honey; delicate cheese from the island Trinacria lay on embossed copper plates, and in the centre of the table stood a silver ornament like an altar, round which wreaths of myrtle and roses were twined, and from the top of which issued fragrant fumes.

At the further end of the table shone the silver bowl in which the wine was mixed: it was a splendid piece of Æginetan work; the bent handles represented two giants, who seemed to give way under the weight of the vessel they carried. This bowl was wreathed with flowers, like the altar in the middle of the table, and a rose or myrtle wreath was wound round each goblet.

Rose-leaves were scattered about the whole room, and many lamps hung against the smooth walls of white stucco.

The guests had scarcely seated themselves on the couches, when the fair-haired boys appeared again, wound garlands of myrtle and ivy round their brows and shoulders, and washed their feet in silver basins. The carver had already taken the first joints from the table in order to carve them, but the Sybarite was still occupied with the boys, and though he smelt of all the perfumes of Arabia, he let them

fairly smother him in roses and myrtles; when the first dish—tunny fish with mustard sauce—was brought in, he forgot all secondary considerations, and occupied himself solely with the enjoyment of the excellent fare. Rhodopis sat in an arm-chair at the head of the table by the great bowl, led the conversation, and superintended the attendant slaves.

She surveyed her joyous guests with a certain feeling of pride, and seemed to occupy herself exclusively with each. Now she inquired of the Delphian the result of his collection; then she asked the Sybarite whether the work of her cook pleased him. Again she listened to Ibycus, who told how Phrynichus of Athens had substituted plays founded on subjects taken from life for the religious plays of Thespis of Icaria, and had had whole scenes from former history acted with choruses and dialogues.

Then she turned to the Spartan, and said that he was the only one to whom she must apologize, not for the simple fare, but for its luxury. If he would come again soon her slave Cnacias, an escaped Helot who boasted that he could cook a splendid blood soup (at these words the Sybarite shuddered), should prepare a real Lacedæmonian meal for him.

When the guests had appeased their hunger they again washed their hands. Then the table was cleared, the floor swept, and wine and water were poured into the bowl.¹ At last Rhodopis, after she had assured herself that everything was going on satisfactorily, turned to Phanes, who was disputing with the Milesians, and said: "Noble friend, we have controlled our impatience so long that I think it is your duty to tell us what unfortunate incident threatens to tear you from Egypt and from our midst. You may leave us and this country with the light heart that the gods are wont to bestow on you Ionians at birth as a precious gift, but we shall long think of you with sorrow, for I know no greater loss than that of a friend whom you have found faithful for years. Some of us have lived so long on the Nile that we have adopted, to a certain degree, the unchanging, constant temper of the Egyptians. You

¹ After the actual meal came the symposium. The guests adorned themselves with wreaths, washed their hands, and attacked the wine.

smile; and yet I think that though you have long wished to return to Greece, you will not part from us without regret. You agree? Well, tell us why you must leave Egypt, or wish to leave it, so that we may consider whether it is not possible to prevent your exile from court, and to keep you with us."

Phanes smiled bitterly, and said: "I thank you, Rhodopis, for your flattering words and your good intention of grieving for my departure, or of trying to prevent it. Hundreds of new faces will soon make you forget mine, for though you have lived on the Nile for a long while, you have remained a Greek in every respect, and you can be thankful to the gods that this is the case. I too am a friend of constancy, but an enemy of Egyptian folly. Is there one among you who thinks it wise to grieve at the inevitable? Egyptian constancy is madness, and no virtue in my eyes. These people who have preserved their dead for thousands of years till now, and who would rather be deprived of their last piece of bread than of one bone of their ancestors,¹ are not constant, but foolish. Can it give me pleasure to see those whom I love sad? Certainly not. You are not to think of me for months with daily lamentations, like the Egyptians when they have lost a friend. If in the future you really wish to think of your dead or absent friend—for I may never enter Egypt again as long as I live—think of him with smiles, and do not exclaim, "Oh, why was Phanes obliged to leave us?" but say, "We wish to be as happy as Phanes was while he still dwelt in our midst." That is how you should behave, that is what Simonides enjoined when he sang:—

If we could but a little wiser be
Then we should cease to mourn our friends so long,
And at their grave would grieve but for a day.
Long is the time that we have given for death,
But few the years of life, evil our plight.²

If we are not to mourn for the dead, it is still more

¹ An Egyptian gave his last coin rather than allow the mummies of his ancestors to fall to pieces, else he was considered disgraced, and burial was refused him when he died. He was allowed to pawn the mummies if he was in debt (Diodorus, i. 93).

² Simonides fragm. ed. Bergk.

foolish to grieve over parting friends, for the former have gone for ever, but to the latter we say in parting, "We shall meet again."

The Sybarite who had long grown impatient, could contain himself no longer, and cried with dismal voice, "Begin your story, I cannot drink a drop unless you leave off talking of death. I have grown quite cold, and I am ill every time when I—well, when I hear people speak about our ceasing to live!" The whole company laughed, but Phanes began his story.

"You know that in Sais I live in the new palace. At Memphis, in my capacity of captain of the Greek body-guard, which must accompany the king wherever he travels, I had lodgings assigned to me in the left wing of the old palace.

"Since the time of Psamtik I. the kings have taken up their residence at Sais, and the interior of the remaining palaces has, therefore, been somewhat neglected. My apartments were admirably situated on the whole, and splendidly fitted up; they would have been perfect if a dreadful nuisance had not been apparent from the day of my arrival.

"In the daytime my rooms left nothing to be desired, and besides I was seldom at home, but at night sleep was impossible. Thousands of rats and mice made a terrible noise under the rotten floor, and the beds, and behind the old hangings on the walls. I did not know what to do, until, at last, an Egyptian soldier sold me two beautiful large cats which, after a few weeks, brought me some respite from my tormentors.

"You all know that one of the most amiable laws of this strange people whose wisdom and culture you, my Milesian friends, are never weary of praising, declares that cats are sacred. Divine honours are paid to these happy quadrupeds and to many other beasts, and if they are killed, the assassin is punished with as much severity as though he had slain a man."

Rhodopis, who had smiled till now, became more serious when she heard that his exile was connected with contempt shown by him to these sacred animals. She knew how many victims, how many human lives, this superstition of the Egyptians had already cost. A short time ago, king

Amasis had been unable to save a Samian, who had slain a cat, from the vengeance of the angry people.¹

"Everything was in order," continued the captain, "when we left Memphis two years ago.

"I had left the two cats to the care of an Egyptian servant in the palace, and knew that the animals would keep my rooms free from their enemies the rats. I even began to feel a certain respect for my friendly preservers from the invasion of mice.

"Last year, Amasis fell ill before the Court could leave for Memphis, so we remained at Sais. At last, about six weeks ago, we started for the town of the pyramids. I occupied my former apartments, and found not even the shadow of a mouse's tail, but instead of mice the place was swarming with another race of animals, whom I liked as little as their predecessors. The pair of cats had increased twelve times in the two years of my absence. I tried to banish the troublesome animals of every age and colour, but I was unsuccessful, and every night my sleep was disturbed by dreadful choruses, the war cries and serenades of cats.

"Every year, at the time of the Bubastis feast the Egyptians are allowed to bring the superfluous mouse catchers to the temple of the cat-headed goddess Pacht, where they are cared for and made away with, I believe, when they increase too rapidly. These priests are rogues.

"Unfortunately, the great pilgrimage to the temple² I have mentioned, did not take place during our residence at the Pyramids, but I could not bear the persecuting host any longer, and when two mother cats again presented me with a dozen healthy descendants, I determined that I would at least get rid of these. My old slave Mus,³ whose very name shows that he is an enemy of cats, was ordered to kill the little creatures, put them in a sack, and throw them into the Nile.

¹ The cat was the most sacred of the many sacred animals of the Egyptians. Herod. says (ii. 66) that if a house was on fire the first thought of the Egyptians was to save the cat; if it died they shaved off their hair as a sign of mourning. The bodies of cats were carefully embalmed; every museum possesses specimens of cat mummies.

² The goddess Pacht (Sechet or Bast) had her temple in Bubastis on the eastern Delta. She is represented with a cat's head.

³ The Greek name Mus signifies "mouse."

"This murder was necessary, otherwise the mewling of the young cats would have betrayed the contents of the sack to the servants of the palace. As soon as it was dark poor Mus went with his dangerous burden through the Grove of Hathor,¹ to the Nile. But the Egyptian servant who was accustomed to feed my animals and knew each cat by name, had guessed our design.

"My slave went on calmly through the great sphinx alley, past the temple of Ptah;² he held the little sack hidden under his cloak. In the sacred grove he had already noticed that he was followed, but he paid no attention and went on, perfectly satisfied, when he saw that the people who followed him, stopped at the temple of Ptah, and spoke to the priests.

"He had already reached the shores of the Nile when he heard voices calling him, and many people running after him, and a stone flew whizzing past his head.

"Mus at once saw the full extent of the danger that threatened him. He put forth all his strength, rushed to the Nile, flung the sack into the water, and stood on the shores of the river with beating heart, but, as he thought, without any proof of his guilt. In a few minutes he was surrounded by a hundred attendants of the temple. The chief priest of Ptah, my old enemy Ptahotep, had not disdained to follow the pursuers.

"Several of them, among them the treacherous servant of the palace, entered the Nile, and found, unfortunately for us, the sack with its twelve bodies which hung safely in the papyrus reeds and beans on the shore. Before the eyes of the chief priest, a crowd of servants of the temple, and at least a thousand inhabitants of Memphis who had hurried up, the cotton coffin was opened. When its contents

¹ The goddess of love, ancient goddess of the horizon, and mother of Horus. She is one of the most important Egyptian deities. She is the personification of fertility, and hence it is she who causes the Nile to rise. She holds rope and tambourine in her hand in reference to the binding qualities and pleasures of love; for though dance, song and jest, were under her patronage, she was worshipped principally as goddess of love. The cow was dedicated to her, and she is often represented as a woman with a cow's head, bearing the disc of the sun between her horns.

² The temple of the great god Ptah was one of the most celebrated buildings in Egypt. King Menes is said to have begun it.

were laid bare there arose a cry of lamentation, vengeance, and mourning, so terrible that I heard it in the palace. The furious mob rushed on my old servant, threw him on the ground, trampled on him and would have slain him if the all-powerful chief priest had not commanded that the ill-treated criminal should be put in prison, for he suspected that I was the originator of the crime and intended that I, too, should be destroyed.

“Half-an-hour later, I was arrested.

“My old servant, Mus, took all the blame to himself, till, by means of the bastinado, the chief priest extorted from him the confession that I had ordered him to kill the cats, and that he, as a faithful servant, had been obliged to obey my commands.

“The chief court, against whose decisions even the king is powerless, is formed of priests from Memphis, Heliopolis, and Thebes; you can therefore imagine that poor Mus and I were at once condemned to death. The slave was condemned because of two capital offences—the murder of the sacred animals, and the twelvefold desecration of the Nile by means of the bodies; I, because I was the originator of this twenty-fourfold capital crime, as they called it. Mus was executed that same day. May the earth rest lightly on him. In my memory he will live, not as my slave, but as my benefactor. In the presence of his corpse my death sentence was read to me, and I was already preparing for the long journey to the Nether World, when the king commanded that the execution of my sentence should be delayed.

“I was led back to my prison. An Arcadian taxiarch,¹ who was among my guards, informed me that all the Greek officers of the body-guard and a number of soldiers, altogether more than 4,000 men, had threatened to resign if I, their leader, were not pardoned.

“When it grew dark, I was led to the king. He himself confirmed the statement of the taxiarch, and expressed his sorrow that he must lose the services of a captain who was so beloved. I must confess for my part, that I am not angry with Amasis, indeed I pity him, powerful king as he is. You should have heard him complain of his

¹ Leader of a Taxis or captain of a company (Lysias, *Apol.* p. 162).

inability to act as he wished; even in his private affairs, the influence of the priests annoys and compromises him at every step. He said that if it depended on him alone, he would gladly forgive me for breaking a law which I, a stranger, could not understand, and which must therefore appear to me in a false light as a senseless superstition. But he dared not leave me unpunished, because of the priests. Exile from Egypt was the lightest punishment he could inflict on me. 'You do not know'—with these words he ended his lament—'what enormous concessions I have had to make to the priests to obtain mercy for you; you know that our chief court is independent even of me, the king.'

"I was dismissed after I had solemnly sworn to leave Memphis the same day, and Egypt in three weeks at the latest.

"At the gates of the palace I met Psamtik, the crown prince, who has long persecuted me on account of certain annoying incidents which I cannot reveal. You know what I mean, Rhodopis. I bade him farewell, but he turned his back on me, exclaiming, 'You have once more escaped punishment, Athenian, but you have not yet escaped my vengeance. Wherever you go, I shall know how to find you.' 'Then I may hope to see you again,' returned I.

"I had my goods placed in a boat, and came hither to Naucratis, where I was fortunate enough to meet my old friend, Aristomachus of Sparta, who will probably be appointed my successor, for he was formerly commander of the troops of Cyprus.¹ I should be glad to see my place taken by so excellent a man, were it not that I fear that his merit will make my services appear even more insignificant than they really were."

Here Aristomachus interrupted the Athenian, and cried: "Enough of praise, friend Phanes. Spartan tongues are awkward, but if you need my help, I will answer you with deeds, that will hit the right nail on the head."

Rhodopis smiled approvingly at the two men. Then she gave her hand to each, and said: "Unfortunately, dear

¹ Amasis had carried on a successful war against Cyprus.

Phanes, your story has shown me that you can no longer remain in this land. I will not reproach you for your folly, but you might have known that you were braving great dangers for small results. A really prudent and courageous man will undertake a bold deed only when the benefit which might accrue to him is greater than the disadvantages. Rashness is just as foolish, though not, perhaps, as reprehensible as cowardice, for though both may injure a man, the latter alone disgraces him. This time your carelessness nearly cost you your life, a life which is dear to many, and which you ought to preserve for a better end than to fall a victim to folly. We may not try to keep you with us, for we could not help you, and should certainly harm ourselves. This noble Spartan shall in future take your place, and as captain of the Greeks represent our nation at court, protect it from the encroachments of the priests, and try to preserve the king's favour for it. I hold your hand, Aristomachus, and will not let it go, till you promise to act as Phanes did before you, and to protect as far as it is in your power, even the lowest Greek from the arrogance of the Egyptians; to resign your post rather than let the most trivial crime against a Greek escape punishment. We are but a few thousands among as many millions, all hostile to us, but we are great in courage, and must strive to remain strong in unity. Till to-day, the Greeks in Egypt have acted as brothers. One sacrificed himself for all, all for one, and it was this very unity that made us powerful, that will keep us strong in the future. Would that we could give the same unity to our native land and its colonies; would that all the races of our home, forgetful of their Dorian, Ionic, or Æolian descent, would content themselves with the name of Greeks, and live together like children of one house, like the sheep of one flock; then the whole world would not be able to resist us. Hellas would be recognized by all nations as their queen."

Rhodopis' eyes flashed as she spoke; the Spartan pressed her hand, impetuously stamped on the floor with his wooden leg, and cried: "By Zeus, no one shall touch a Greek while I can prevent it. But you, Rhodopis, you ought to have been a Spartan."

"An Athenian," cried Phanes.

"An Ionian," said the Milesian.

"A daughter of a Samian geomore," cried the sculptor.

"But I am more than all this," cried Rhodopis, with enthusiasm, "I am a Greek!"

All were carried away by her words. Even the Syrian and the Hebrew could not resist the general enthusiasm. The Sybarite alone remained unmoved, and said, with his mouth full:

"You also deserve to be a Sybarite, for your beef is the best that I have tasted since I left Italy, and your wine of Anthylla tastes just as good as that of Vesuvius and Chios."

All laughed, but the Spartan looked contemptuously at the Sybarite.

"Hail! friends," suddenly cried a deep voice through the open window.

"Welcome," answered the chorus of guests, while they wondered who the late arrival was.

They had not long to wait for the stranger; before the Sybarite had found time carefully to taste another sip of wine, a tall thin man, of about sixty, with a long, well-shaped, intelligent head, stood beside Rhodopis. It was Callias, son of Phænippus of Athens.¹

The late visitor was one of the wealthiest exiles of Athens, who had twice bought the property of Pisistratus from the state, and twice lost it when the despot returned; he looked at his friends with bright, keen eyes, and cried, after he had exchanged friendly greetings with all,

"If you are not very grateful for my presence to-day, I shall declare that all gratitude has vanished from the world."

"We have long expected you," interrupted one of the Milesians. "You are the first to bring us news of the result of the Olympic games."

"And we could not wish for a better messenger than the former victor," added Rhodopis.

"Sit down," cried Phanes, full of impatience; "tell us briefly and concisely what you know, friend Callias."

¹ A distinguished Athenian who lived at the time of our story. According to Herod. vi. 122, he was victorious in the horse race and chariot race.

"Directly, countrymen," answered Callias, "it is some time since I left Olympia, and embarked at Cenchreæ on a Samian fifty-oared ship, the best vessel that was ever built. I am not surprised that no Greek has reached Naucratis before me, for we encountered frightful storms, and would scarcely have escaped with our lives, if these Samian boats with their fat stomachs, thin beaks, and fish-tails, were not so splendidly built and manned. Who knows whither the other homeward-bound travellers may have been driven; we were able to take refuge in the harbour of Samos, and to depart again after sixteen days.

"When we entered the Nile early this morning, I at once took boat and was speeded on my way by Boreas, who wished to show that he still loved his old Callias. so that a few minutes ago, I saw the most hospitable of houses; I saw the flag fly, I saw the open windows illuminated, and hesitated as to whether or no I should enter; but I could not resist your charms, Rhodopis, and besides I should have been suffocated by all the untold news, which I bear with me, if I had not landed, in order to enjoy a slice of meat and a glass of wine, while I tell events of which you do not dream."

Callias sank down comfortably on a couch, and before he began his meal, handed Rhodopis a splendid golden bracelet in the shape of a serpent, which he had bought at a high price, in the workshop of that very Theodorus who sat at table with him.

"That is for you," he said, turning to his delighted hostess. "But I have something still better for you, friend Phanes. Guess who won the prize in the race with the quadriga?"

"An Athenian?" asked Phanes, with glowing cheeks, for was not every Olympic victory a triumph for the whole community to which the victor belonged, and was not the Olympic olive branch the highest honour and greatest happiness which could fall to the lot of a Greek, or even to a whole Greek race?"

"Well guessed, Phanes," cried the messenger of joy. "An Athenian has won the first prize of all, and what is more, it is your cousin Cimon, son of Cypselos, and brother of that Miltiades, who, nine Olympiads ago, gained the same

honour for us; this year he was victorious for the second time with the very horses which obtained him the prize at the last festival. Truly the Philædæ¹ obscure more and more the fame of the Alcmaeonidæ. Does the fame of your family make you proud and happy, friend Phanes?"

Phanes had risen in great joy; he seemed suddenly to have increased in stature.

Full of intense pride, he gave his hand to the messenger of victory, who embraced his countryman, and continued:—

"We may indeed feel proud and happy, Phanes, and you may rejoice above all; for after the judges had unanimously awarded the prize to Cimon, he bade the heralds proclaim the despot Pisistratus as the owner of the splendid horses, and therefore as victor. Pisistratus at once announced that your family might now return to Athens, and so the long-wished-for hour of return has come to you at last."

At these words the glow of pleasure faded from the face of the officer, and the conscious pride of his glances changed to anger, as he cried:

"I am to rejoice, foolish Callias! I could rather weep when I think that a descendant of Ajax is capable of ignominiously laying his well-merited fame at the feet of a tyrant. I am to return? I swear by Athene, by Father Zeus, and Apollo, that I will rather starve in exile, than turn my steps towards home while Pisistratus tyrannizes over my native land. I am free as the eagle in the clouds, now that I have left the service of Amasis, but I would rather be the hungry slave of a peasant, in a strange land, than at home, the first servant of Pisistratus. The power in Athens belongs to us, the nobles, but Cimon, when he laid his wreath at the feet of Pisistratus, kissed the sceptre of the tyrant, and stamped himself with the seal of slavery. I will tell Cimon that to me, to Phanes, the favour of the despot is of little consequence. I *will* remain an exile till my country is free, and nobles and people again govern themselves and dictate their own laws.

¹ The most distinguished family of nobles in Athens beside the Alcmaeonidæ. They boasted of descent from Ajax. The Miltiadæ and Cimon belonged to this family.

Phanes will not do homage to the oppressor, though a thousand Cimons, though each of the Alcmaeonidae, though the whole of your race, Callias, the wealthy Daduchis,¹ throw themselves at Pisistratus' feet."

He surveyed the assembly with flaming eyes, and old Callias, too, looked at the guests with pride. It was as if he wished to say to each one: "See, my friends, such are the men my glorious home produces."

Then he again took Phanes' hand, and said:

"My friend, the oppressor is as hateful to me as to you; but I cannot close my eyes to the fact that as long as Pisistratus lives, tyranny cannot be destroyed. His allies, Lygdamus of Naxos, and Polycrates of Samos, are powerful, but the wisdom and moderation of Pisistratus are more dangerous for our freedom. I saw with terror, during my late stay in Hellas, that the people of Athens love the oppressor like a father. In spite of his power, he leaves the spirit of Solon's constitution unaltered. He adorns the town with most beautiful works of art. The new temple of Zeus, which is being built of marble, by Callæschrus, Antistates, and Porinus, whom you know, Theodorus, is to surpass all buildings which the Greeks have ever erected. He knows how to attract artists and poets of every description to Athens; he has Homer's songs written down, and the sayings of Musæus of Onomacritus are collected by his orders. He is having new streets built, and introduces new festivals; trade flourishes under his rule, and in spite of the heavy taxes imposed on the people, their prosperity seems not to diminish but to increase. But what is the people? A common herd that flies, like a moth, towards every thing that glitters; though it scorches its wings, it still flutters round the candle while it burns. Let Pisistratus' torch be extinguished, Phanes, and I swear to you, the changeable crowd will greet the new light, the returning nobles, as eagerly as it greeted the tyrant but a short time ago. Give me your hand again, true son of Ajax; but my friends, I have still much to tell you. Cimon, as I said, won the chariot race, and gave his olive branch to Pisistratus.

¹ Callias was called a Daduchus because the right of carrying torches at the Eleusian mysteries was hereditary in his family.

I never saw four more splendid horses. Arcesilaus of Cyrene, Cleosthenes of Epidamnus, Aster of Sybaris, Hecataeus of Miletus, and many others, sent beautiful horses to Olympia. Altogether the games were unusually brilliant this year. All Greece sent representatives, Rhoda, the Ardeate town in distant Iberia,¹ wealthy Tartessus, Sinope, in the far east, on the shores of the Pontus, in short, every race which boasts of Greek origin was well represented. The Sybarites sent messengers to the festival, whose appearance was simply dazzling, the Spartans simple men, with the beauty of Achilles and the stature of Hercules; the Athenians distinguished themselves by supple limbs and graceful movements; the Crotonians were led by Milo, the strongest man of human origin; the Samians and Milesians vied with the Corinthians and Mitylenians in splendour and magnificence. The flower of the youth of Greece was assembled there, and many beautiful maidens, chiefly from Sparta, sat beside men of every rank and nation; they had come to Olympia to encourage the men by their applause. The market was on the other side of the Alphæus, and there you could see merchants from all parts of the world. Greeks, Carchedonians, Lydians, Phrygians, and bargaining Phœnicians from Palestine, concluded important affairs, and exposed their wares in tents and booths. Why should I describe to you the surging crowds, the resounding choruses, the smoking hecatombs, the gay dresses, the valuable chariots and horses, the confusion of many tongues, the joyous cries of old friends who meet again after years of separation, the splendour of the ambassadors sent to the festival, the swarms of spectators and merchants, the excitement as to the result of the games, the splendid spectacle presented by the crowded audience, the endless delight whenever a victory was decided, the solemn presentation of the branch which a boy of Elis, both of whose parents must still be living, cut with a golden knife from the sacred olive tree, in the Altis,² which Hercules himself planted many centuries ago? Why should I describe the never-ending shouts of

¹ Iberia, the ancient name for Spain.

² The sacred grove of plantains and olives between the brook Cladeus and the river Alphæus.

joy which thundered through the Stadium¹ when Milo of Crotona appeared and bore the bronze statue of himself by Dameasthrough the Stadium to the Altis without stumbling? A giant would have been bowed to the ground by the weight of metal, but Milo carried it as a Lacedæmonian nurse carries a little boy. The finest wreaths after Cimon's were won by two Spartan brothers, Lysander and Maro, sons of a banished noble, Aristomachus. Maro was victor in the running match. Lysander, to the delight of all present, challenged Milo, the irresistible victor of Pisa, and the Pythian and Isthmian games, to a wrestling match. Milo was taller and stronger than the Spartan, whose figure resembled Apollo's, and whose great youth proved that he had scarcely outgrown the Pædanomos.²

"The youth and the man stood opposite each other in their nude beauty, glistening with golden oil, like a panther and a lion preparing for combat. Young Lysander raised his hands before the first attack, adjured the gods, and cried, 'For my father, my honour, and Sparta's fame!' The Crotonian gave the youth a condescending smile, like that of a dainty eater before he begins to open the shell of a langusta.

"Now the wrestling began. For a long while neither could take hold of the other. The Crotonian tried with his powerful, almost irresistible, arms to seize his adversary, who eluded the terrible grasp of the athlete's claw-like hands. The struggle for the embrace lasted long, and the immense audience looked on, silent and breathless. Not a sound was heard, save the panting of the combatants, and the singing of the birds in the Altis. At last—at last, with the most beautiful movement I ever saw, the youth was able to clasp his adversary. For a long while Milo exerted himself in vain to free himself from the firm hold of the youth. The perspiration caused by the terrible contest amply watered the sand of the Stadium.

"The excitement of the spectators increased more and more, the silence became deeper and deeper, the encouraging cries grew rarer, the groans of the two combatants waxed

¹ The scene of the competition.

² Superintendent of educational matters in Sparta. Xenoph. Respubl. Lacedæmon.

more and more audible. At last the youth's strength gave way. An encouraging cry from thousands of throats cheered him on; he collected his strength with a superhuman effort, and tried to throw himself again on his adversary, but the Crotonian had noticed his momentary exhaustion, and pressed the youth in an irresistible embrace. A stream of black blood gushed from the beautiful lips of the youth, who sank lifeless to the earth from the wearied arms of the giant. Democedes,¹ the most celebrated physician of our days, you Samians must have seen him at Polycrates' court, hurried up, but no art could help the happy youth, for he was dead.

"Milo was obliged to resign the wreath,² and the fame of the youth will resound through all Greece. Truly, I would rather be dead like Lysander, son of Aristomachus, than live like Callias, to know an inactive old age in a strange land. All Greece, represented by its best men, accompanied the body of the beautiful youth to the funeral pyre, and his statue is to be placed in the Altis, beside those of Milo of Croton, and Praxidamas of Ægina.

"Finally, the heralds proclaimed the award of the judges. 'Sparta shall receive a victor's wreath for the dead man, for it was not Milo but death who conquered noble Lysander, and he who goes forth unconquered after a two hours' struggle with the strongest of the Greeks, is well deserving of the olive branch.'"

Callias was silent for a minute. In the excitement of describing these events, more precious than aught else to the Greek heart, he had paid no attention to those present, but had stared straight before him while the images of the combatants passed before his mind's eye. Now he looked round, and saw to his surprise, that the grey-haired man with the wooden leg, who had already attracted his attention, although he did not know him, had hidden his face in his hands, and was shedding scalding tears.

Rhodopis stood on his right, Phanes on his left, and

¹ A celebrated physician, a native of Croton, in Lower Italy. He was private physician to Polycrates. He was forcibly carried off to the Persian court, where he practised with skill, and whence he finally escaped.

² The victor's reward could not be claimed by the man whose opponent died.

everyone looked at the Spartan as though he were the hero of the story.

The quick Athenian saw at once that the old man was closely related to one of the Olympic victors; but when he heard that Aristomachus was the father of those two glorious Spartan brothers, whose beautiful forms still haunted him like visions from the world of the gods, he looked with envious admiration on the sobbing old man, and his clear eyes filled with tears, which he did not try to keep back. In those days men wept whenever they hoped that the solace of tears would relieve them. In anger, in great joy, in every affliction, we find strong heroes weeping, while, on the other hand, the Spartan boy would let himself be severely scourged, even to death, at the altar of Artemis Orthia, in order to gain the praise of the men.

For a time all the guests remained silent and respected the old man's emotion. At length Jeshua, the Israelite, who had abstained from all food which was prepared in Greek fashion, broke the silence and said in broken Greek:—

"Weep your fill, Spartan. I know what it is to lose a son. Was I not forced, eleven years ago, to lay a beautiful boy in the grave in a strange land, by the waters of Babylon where my people pined in captivity? If my beautiful child had lived but one year longer, he would have died at home, and we could have laid him in the grave of his fathers. But Cyrus the Persian, may Jehovah bless his descendants, freed us a year too late and I must grieve doubly for my beloved child, because his grave is dug in the land of Israel's foes. Is anything more terrible than to see our children, our best treasures, sink in the grave before us? Adonai have mercy on me; to lose such an excellent child as your son, just when he had become a famous man, must be the greatest of griefs."

The Spartan removed his hands from his stern face and said, smiling amidst his tears: "You are mistaken, Phoenician, I weep with joy and I would gladly have lost my second son, had he died like Lysander."

The Israelite, horrified at this statement which seemed wicked and unnatural to him, contented himself with shaking his head in disapproval; the Greeks overwhelmed the old man, whom they all envied, with con-

gratulations. Intense joy seemed to have made Aristomachus many years younger, and he said to Rhodopis: "Truly, friend, your house is a blessed one for me; this is the second gift I have received from the gods since I entered it."

"And what was the first?" asked the matron.

"A favourable oracle."

"You forget the third gift," cried Phanes. "The gods permitted you to become acquainted with Rhodopis to-day. But what about the oracle?"

"May I tell our friends?" asked the Delphian.

Aristomachus nodded consent, and Phryxus again read the answer of the oracle:—

When from the snow-clad heights descend the men in their armour,
Down to the shores of the winding stream, which waters the valley,
Then the delaying boat shall conduct you unto the meadows
Where the peace of home is to the wanderer given.

When from the snow-clad heights descend the men in their armour,
Then what the judging five have long refused shall be granted.

Scarcely had Phryxus read the last word, when Callias, the Athenian, rose gracefully from his seat and cried: "The fourth gift, the fourth gift of the gods, you shall also receive from me in this house. Know, then, that I kept my strangest tidings till last. The Persians are coming to Egypt."

All the guests sprang from their seats except the Sybarite and Callias could scarcely answer all their questions.

"Patience, patience, friends," he cried at last, "let me tell everything in order, else I shall never finish. It is not an army as you think, Phanes, but an embassy from Cambyzes, the present king of powerful Persia, which is on its way hither. I heard at Samos that they have already reached Miletus. They will arrive here in a few days. Relations of the king, and even old Croesus of Lydia are with them. We shall see rare splendour. No one knows the reason of their coming, but it is thought that King Cambyzes will propose an alliance to Amasis; it is even said that the king wishes to woo the daughter of the Pharaohs."

"An alliance," said Phanes, with an incredulous shrug,

"the Persians already rule half the world. All the chief powers of Asia bow to their sceptre. Only Egypt and our Greece have remained safe from the conqueror."

"You forget golden India, and the great nomadic races of Asia," returned Callias. "You also forget that an empire which consists of seventy races, possessing different languages and customs, always bears in it the seeds of rebellion, and must be on its guard against foreign wars, lest some of the provinces seize the favourable moment for revolt when the main body of the army is absent. Ask the Milesians whether they would keep quiet, if they heard that the chief forces of their oppressor had been defeated in battle."

Theopompus, the merchant of Miletus, interrupted the speaker and cried eagerly: "If the Persians are defeated in war, they will be attacked by a hundred foes, and my countrymen will not be the last to rise against the weakened tyrant."

"Whatever the intentions of the Persians may be," continued Callias, "I maintain that they will be here in three days."

"And so your oracle will be fulfilled, happy Aristomachus," cried Rhodopis. "The horsemen from the mountains can be none other than the Persians. When they reach the shores of the Nile, the five ephors will have changed their minds and you, the father of two Olympic victors, will be recalled. Fill the goblets again, Cnacias. Let us drink the last cup to the manes of famous Lysander, and then, though unwillingly, I must warn you of the approach of day. The host who loves his guests rises from table when the joy reaches its climax. The pleasant memory of this untroubled evening will soon bring you back to this house, whereas you would be less willing to return, if you were forced to think of the hours of depression which followed your enjoyment."

All the guests agreed with Rhodopis, and Ibycus praised the festive and pleasurable excitement of the evening and called her a true disciple of Pythagoras.

Every one prepared for departure; even the Sybarite, who to drown the emotion, which annoyed him, had drunk immoderately, raised himself from his comfortable position

with the assistance of his slaves, who had been summoned, and muttered something about violated hospitality.

When Rhodopis held out her hand to him on bidding him farewell he cried, overcome by the wine: "By Hercules, Rhodopis, you turn us out of doors as if we were importunate creditors. I am not accustomed to leave the table as long as I can stand, and I am still less accustomed to be shown the door like a parasite."

"Do you not understand, you immoderate drinker——?" began Rhodopis, trying to excuse herself and smiling; but Philoinus who, in his present mood, was irritated by this retort, laughed scornfully and cried, staggering to the door: "You call me an immoderate drinker, well I call you an insolent slave. By Dionysus, it is easy to see what you were in your youth. Farewell, slave of Iadmon and Xanthus, freed slave of Charaxus."

He had not finished, when the Spartan threw himself on him, gave him a violent blow with his fist and carried the unconscious man, like a child, to the boat which, with his slaves, awaited him at the gate of the garden.

CHAPTER III.

RHODOPIS AND PHANES.

ALL the guests had left the house.

The insults of the drunkard had fallen on the joy of the parting guests like hail on a flourishing cornfield. Rhodopis herself stood pale and trembling in the deserted banquetting-hall. Cnacias extinguished the coloured lamps on the walls. An uncanny twilight took the place of the bright light and showed indistinctly the disordered table, the remains of the feast and the seats pushed back from their places. A cold breeze came through the open door, for the day was beginning, and the time before sunrise is perceptibly cool in Egypt. The lightly-clad matron shivered a little with cold. She stared with tearless eyes at the desolate room which a few minutes ago was full of happiness and rejoicing. She compared her mind to the deserted scene of pleasure. She felt as though a worm were gnawing at her heart, as if her blood had turned to snow and ice.

She stood thus for a long time, till her old slave appeared and lighted her to her room.

Rhodopis submitted in silence to being disrobed, in silence she raised the curtain, which separated a second bedroom from hers. In the middle of the room stood a bed of maple wood on which, on a mattress of soft sheep-skin covered with white sheets, under light blue coverings, slept a lovely, charming being, Sappho, Rhodopis' grand-child. The delicately-rounded figure, the well-cut face, were those of a blooming maiden, the peaceful smile was that of a happy, innocent child.

The beautiful head of the sleeper rested on one hand, which was hidden by the dark brown masses of hair, the

other carelessly held a small amulet of green stone, which hung from her neck. The long lashes of the closed eyes moved almost imperceptibly and a faint, soft flush spread over the sleeper's cheeks. The delicate nostrils rose and sank in regular intervals. Thus we represent innocence; dreaming peace smiles like this; such sleep the gods give only to the untroubled days of early youth.

Rhodopis approached the bed noiselessly and so carefully, that she scarcely touched the thick carpet. She looked with unspeakable affection at the smiling face of the child; she knelt down softly and silently by the bed, and cautiously pressed her face on the soft cushions, so that the maiden's hand touched her hair. Then she wept without restraint, as if with these tears she wished to wash from her soul the sorrow and humiliation she had suffered.

At last she rose, breathed a light kiss on the sleeper's brow, raised her hands in prayer to heaven and went back to her room as cautiously and softly as she had come.

By her couch she found her old slave, who still waited for her.

"Why have you not gone to rest, Melitta?" she asked in a low, pleasant voice. "Go to bed; it is not good to keep long vigils at your age, you know. I do not need you any longer. Good-night! Do not come to-morrow till I call you. I shall sleep but little, and shall be glad if morning brings me short slumber."

The slave hesitated; it was evident she wanted to say something and yet feared to speak.

"You would like to ask me a question?" said Rhodopis.

The old woman still hesitated.

"Tell me what you want, but be quick."

"I saw you weep," said the slave. "You seem unhappy or ill. May I not watch by you? Will you not tell me what pains you? You have often found that it relieves you to tell your trouble. Confide your grief to me once more. It is certain to comfort you, it will bring back peace to your soul."

"No, I cannot speak," answered Rhodopis. Then she continued, with a bitter smile: "I have once more realized that no virtue can blot out a human being's past, and that

shame and misfortune are wont to be synonymous. Good-night ; leave me, Melitta."

At noon on the following day the same boat which had brought the Athenian and the Spartan on the previous evening, stopped at Rhodopis' garden. The sun shone bright and hot in the clear deep blue Egyptian sky; the air was so pure and light, the beetles buzzed so gaily, the boatmen in their boats sang their monotonous chant so loudly and joyously, the shores of the Nile were so luxuriant, so gay with flags, so thronged with people, the palms, sycamores, acacias and charrubes were so green and full of strength, the whole expanse of country seemed to have been endowed with such exceptional fertility by a benevolent deity, that the traveller could not help thinking that all misfortune was banished from these fields, that this was the home of joy and delight.

How often when passing a quiet little village lying hidden among its orchards, we think it is the abode of peace, simplicity and hearty social intercourse. But if we enter the various cottages, we find everywhere anxiety, want, desire, passion, fear, and repentance, sorrow, and misery, and often, alas! but little joy. Who that came to Egypt would guess that the laughing, wealthy, gay country of the sun, whose sky is never clouded, nourished a race inclined to gravity and bitterness; that in the dainty hospitable house of happy Rhodopis, surrounded by flowers, a heart beat in deep grief? What guest of the much-respected Thracian could dream that this heart belonged to the graceful and smiling matron?

Pale, but beautiful and kind as ever, she sat with Phanes in a bower beside the cooling fountain. It was evident that she had been weeping again. The Athenian held her hand and spoke encouragingly to her. Rhodopis listened to him patiently; smiling now bitterly, now assentingly. At last she interrupted her well-meaning friend, and said:—

"I thank you; sooner or later this insult will also be forgotten. Time is a good physician. If I were weak, I would leave Naucratis and live in solitude solely for my grand-child. I assure you that there is a whole world in that young being. A thousand times have I wished to leave Egypt; a thousand times have I conquered my longing. It is

not the desire for homage from your sex that keeps me; I have had so much of that, I am more than satisfied. It is the certainty that I can be of use in some degree to noble, freeborn men, that I may sometimes even be indispensable to them, which keeps me here,—me, the once despised woman, the former slave. Accustomed as I am to a large sphere of activity among men, the mere care of a beloved being would not satisfy me; I should fade like a flower transplanted from fertile soil to a desert, and my grand-child would soon be left quite desolate and thrice orphaned. I shall remain in Egypt! Now, when you are gone, I shall become truly necessary to our friends. Amasis is old; if Psamtik should succeed him we shall have to contend with great difficulties, which we have been spared till now. I must remain and continue to fight and prepare the way for Greek freedom and Greek prosperity. That is the aim of my life. I am all the more faithful to my aim, because a woman has seldom dared to dedicate her life to such a purpose. Let men call my yearnings unwomanly if they like. This night, which I spent in weeping, showed me that there is still very much of that woman's weakness left in me which is at the same time the happiness and misfortune of my sex. My first task has been to preserve this weakness, and all tender, womanly qualities in my grand-child. The second has been to free myself from every weakness. But it is impossible to fight against one's own nature without incurring defeat. When pain threatens to overcome me, when I feel inclined to despair, the only way in which I can comfort myself is to think of (Pythagoras,) my friend, the most glorious of all living men, and of his words: 'Be moderate in all things; beware of joyous delight, despairing grief, and strive to keep your soul harmonious and melodious, like the strings of a well-tuned harp.' My Sappho shows me daily this Pythagorean calmness, this perfect, undisturbed peace of mind; I strive in vain to obtain it, in spite of the many strokes of fate which put the strings of my heart out of tune. Now I am calm, you cannot imagine what an influence the mere thought of that great thinker, that calm, moderate man, has upon me. His memory thrills my being like a soft, but invigorating sound. You knew him, too, and must

understand what I mean. Now, I entreat you to tell me your desire. My heart is calm as the waves of the Nile which flows past us so tranquil and clear. Be it good or ill, I am prepared to listen."

"That is how I like to see you," returned the Athenian. "If you had thought at once of the noble friend of wisdom as Pythagoras was accustomed to call himself, your soul would have been restored to its beautiful balance yesterday. Our master commands us every evening to review in our minds the events, feelings and thoughts of the day. Had you done this, you would have told yourself that the sincere admiration of all your guests, among whom were men of high merit, outweighed the insults of a drunken libertine. You would have been forced to feel that you are a friend of the gods, for in your house the immortals bestowed on an old man after years of misfortune, the greatest happiness which can fall to the lot of mortal. They deprived you of one friend, only to give you another and a better. Do not contradict me, and now let me tell you what I wish to ask.

"You know that I am sometimes called a Halicarnassian, sometimes an Athenian.¹ The Ionian, Æolian, and Dorian mercenaries never agreed very well with the Carians. My threefold descent, if I may call it so, was therefore particularly useful to me, the leader of both parties. Amasis will miss me in spite of Aristomachus' excellent qualities, for I easily kept the peace among the mercenaries, while the Spartan will be greatly troubled by the Carians. My twofold descent is due to the fact that my father married a Halicarnassian woman of pure Dorian blood. He resided at Halicarnassus when I was born, in order to obtain the inheritance of her parents. Although I was taken to Athens when I was three months old, I am really a Carian, for a man's home is determined by his birthplace.

"In Athens I, one of the young Eupatridæ of the ancient and aristocratic race of Ajax, was brought up and educated with all the pride of an Attic noble. Brave, clever Pistratus, who belonged to a family which, though of the same rank as ours, is by no means superior, (there is no higher

¹ Herod. i. 63, 64, calls Phanes a Halicarnassian. We have made him an Athenian, as we wished to represent an Attic noble.

race than my father's,) was able to seize the power. Twice the united efforts of the nobles were successful in overthrowing him. When assisted by Lygdamis of Naxos, the Argives and Eretrians, he tried to return for the third time, we once more opposed him. We encamped by the temple of Athene, at Pallene. The clever despot surprised us while we were sacrificing to the goddess before breakfast, attacked our unarmed men, and won an easy, bloodless victory. As half the army which was opposed to tyranny was entrusted to me, I determined to die rather than to surrender. I fought with all my strength, urged my soldiers not to yield, and neither retreated nor gave way, but fell at last with a spear in my shoulder. The Pisistratidæ became masters of Athens. I fled to Halicarnassus, my second home, accompanied by my wife and children, was appointed commander of the mercenary troops in Egypt, because a victory at the Pythian Games and bold deeds in battle had made my name known, joined in the campaign in Cyprus, shared with Aristomachus the glory of gaining possession of the birth-place of Venus for Amasis, and ended by becoming the commander of all the mercenary troops in Egypt.

“My wife died last summer; the children, a boy of eleven and a girl of ten, remained with their aunt in Halicarnassus. She, too, fell a prey to unappeasable Hades. I gave orders a few days ago that the children should come here. They cannot reach Naucratis till three weeks have elapsed and perhaps they will have set out before a contrary order can reach them. I must leave Egypt in three weeks and cannot receive the children myself. I have determined to go to the Thracian Chersonesus, to which place, as you know, the Dolonci have summoned my uncle. The children are to follow me, Corax, my faithful old slave, will remain in Naucratis to bring the little ones to me. If you wish to show me that you are truly my friend, receive them and care for them till a ship sails for Thrace, and hide them carefully from the spies of prince Psamtik. You know he is my mortal foe, and he might easily strike at the father through the children. I have asked this great favour of you because I know your kind nature and because the king's letter, which makes your house an asylum, will save my children from the inquiries of the

police, who, in this land of formalities, command that the district officials must be apprised of the arrival of all strangers, even children. You see how highly I esteem you, for I give you the sole thing that makes me still care for life. Even my home is nothing to me while it is disgraced by the rule of the tyrant. Will you restore peace to a father's anxious heart?"

"I will, I will, Phanes," cried Rhodopis, with sincere delight, "you are asking nothing of me. You give me a present. Oh, how I look forward to the little ones. And how Sappho will rejoice when the dear children arrive and cheer her loneliness. But, Phanes, I shall certainly not let my little guests leave me with the first Thracian ship. You can surely part with them for another short six months; I promise that they shall have excellent teaching, and be trained to admire all that is good and beautiful."

"I am sure of that," answered Phanes smiling gratefully, "but still you must let the two little rogues leave with the first ship. My dread of Psantik's vengeance is unfortunately but too well founded. I thank you most heartily for your kindness and love for my children. I think, however, that the distraction caused by these lively little beings will be good for your Sappho in her loneliness."

"Besides," interrupted Rhodopis with downcast eyes, "the confidence which a noble man places in my motherly virtues justifies me in forgetting the insult hurled at me by a drunkard in his cups. Here comes Sappho."

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSIAN EMBASSY.

FIVE days after the evening at Rhodopis' house, a great crowd assembled in the harbour of Sais. Egyptians of both sexes, of every age and rank, stood close together at the edge of the water.

Warriors and merchants in white garments, bordered with coloured fringes, the length of which was determined by the rank of the wearer, mingled in the great crowd of muscular, half-naked men, whose clothing consisted of a loin cloth, the usual garment of the common people. Naked children pushed, jostled and fought, to obtain better places. Mothers in short cloaks held their little ones high up, though they deprived themselves of the expected spectacle. A number of dogs and cats fought at the feet of the eager spectators, who moved cautiously, so as neither to hurt nor kick any of the sacred animals. Constables, armed with long staves, the metal knobs of which bore the name of the king, kept order, and took special care that no one should be pushed by his neighbour into the swollen waters of the Nile, which washed the walls of Sais during the floods—in many cases their anxiety was shown to be justified.

A different class of people was waiting on the broad steps lined with sphinxes, the landing place of the royal boats.

The chief priests sat there on stone benches. Some of them were clad in long white robes; others wore a loin-cloth, costly straps, wide ornaments on their necks and panther skins. A few wore fillets ornamented with feathers, which nestled against their brown temples and the stiff erection of the thick false curls, which fell down the back, others paraded the shining baldness of their carefully-shaven, well-formed heads. The chief judge was

specially distinguished by wearing the largest and best ostrich feather in his head-dress, and a valuable sapphire amulet which hung on his breast from a gold chain.

The chiefs of the Egyptian army wore coloured coats of mail, and carried short swords in their belts. A division of the bodyguard, armed with battle-axes, daggers, bows, and large shields, stood on the right of the steps; on the left stood the Greek mercenaries in Ionic armour. Our friend Aristomachus, their new leader, stood with some of the inferior officers, apart from the Egyptians by the side of the colossal statues of Psamtik I. which were placed at the head of the steps, with their faces turned towards the river. In front of them, on a silver chair, sat prince Psamtik in a close-fitting coloured coat woven with gold; he was surrounded by the chief courtiers, chamberlains, counsellors, and friends of the king, who carried staves with ostrich feathers and golden lotus flowers in their hands. The surging crowd of people shouted and screamed, and gave unmistakeable signs of impatience, while the priests and nobles on the stairs sat looking straight before them in dignified silence. Each one with his calm demeanour, his stiff wig of curls,¹ his false, symmetrically curled beard, resembled the two statues which were perfectly alike in appearance, and regarded the river with a calm, grave, steadfast gaze. Now the blue and purple checked silken sails became visible in the distance. The crowd shouted with joy. "They are coming, they are coming!" they cried. "Take care that you do not tread on that kitten!" "Nurse, hold the girl higher so that she can see!" "You will end by pushing me into the water, Sebak!" "Take care, Phœnician, the boys are throwing burrs into your long beard!" "Now then, Greek, you need not think that Egypt belongs to you, because Amasis allows you to live by the holy river!" "What insolent people these Greeks are! Down with them!" cried an attendant of the temple. "Down with the swine-eaters,² and despisers of the gods!" was shouted on all sides.

¹ The shaving of the head was prescribed by religion. A wig of the kind mentioned is in the Berlin Museum.

² The use of pigs' flesh was strictly prohibited in Egypt.

The crowd prepared for action, but the police were not to be trifled with, and made such use of their long staves that they soon restored peace and order. The large, gaily-coloured sails which were easily distinguished from the blue, white and brown sails of the smaller Nile boats, swarming around them, approached nearer and nearer to the expectant crowd. Now the dignitaries and the prince rose from their seats.

The royal trumpeters blew a loud and piercing blast, and the first of the expected boats stopped at the landing-stage.

The vessel was somewhat long in shape and richly gilt; it bore on its beak the silver figure of a hawk. A golden pavilion, with a purple roof, stood in the middle of the ship. Long couches were placed within inviting to repose. Twenty-four oarsmen, whose loin-cloths were held by valuable straps, sat in the prow of the vessel, moving the oars.

Under the canopy lay six handsome, splendidly-dressed men. Before the boat had stopped, the youngest of them, a youth with bright, golden hair, sprang ashore.

At his appearance a long-drawn "O" escaped from many a girl's mouth, and a pleased smile lighted up the grave faces of some of the dignitaries.

The youth who aroused this admiration was Bartja¹ son of the late, and brother of the reigning king of Persia, and he had received from nature all that a youth of twenty could possibly desire.

Thick, fair, golden hair streamed in luxuriant curls from the blue and white fillet, which was wound round his tiara. His blue eyes were full of life, happiness, kindness, courage, and even pride. His noble face, surrounded by the soft down of his coming beard, would have been worthy of the chisel of a Greek sculptor; his slender, muscular form betrayed great strength and activity. The splendour of his dress equalled his beauty. A great star

¹ Better known as Smerdis. The cuneiform inscriptions at Bisitun or Behistân call him Bartja or Bardiya, Babylonian Barzia. We have taken the name of Psamtik for Amasis' son from the tablets at Karnak, the Cataract islands, &c. The Greeks call him Psammetichos, Psamenitos, or Psammecherites.

of diamonds and turquoises glittered in the centre of the tiara he wore. His upper garment of heavy, white and gold brocade which fell beneath his knees was confined at the waist by a sash of blue and white, the colours of the royal house of Persia. A short, gold sword, whose hilt and sheath were covered with white opals and blue turquoises, hung from his sash. His trousers, which were gathered in tightly at his ankles, and were made of the same gold brocade as his garment, reached to the short, light blue, leather shoes.

His powerful arms, which the long, wide sleeves of his garment left bare, were adorned with several costly bracelets of gold and jewels. A gold chain hung from his slender neck upon his well-developed chest.

This youth was the first to spring ashore. He was followed by Darius, son of Hystaspes, a noble young Persian, like Bartja of royal blood, and scarcely less splendidly dressed than he. The third was a man with snow-white hair, in whose grave, pleasant face were visible the kindness of a child, the experience of a veteran and the intellect of a man. He wore a long purple coat with sleeves, and yellow Lydian boots.¹ His whole appearance was unassuming, and yet years ago this plainly-dressed old man was the most envied being of his time, the man whose name is still used after a lapse of more than two thousand years as typical of the wealthiest of men. He was Cræsus, the dethroned king of Lydia, who now resided at the court of Cambyses as his friend and counsellor, and who had accompanied young Bartja to Egypt as his mentor.

He was followed by Prexaspes the ambassador of the king of Persia, Zopyrus, son of Megabyzus, a noble Persian, the friend of Bartja and Darius; the last to land was Gyges, the pale, slender son of Cræsus, who had become dumb in his fourth year, but whose power of speech had been restored to him by the terror he felt for his father's safety at the taking of Sardes.

Psantik descended the steps to meet the arrivals. His stern, yellow face strove to smile pleasantly. The dignitaries who followed him bowed almost to the ground before the strangers, while their arms hung loosely at their

¹ On account of these boots, which are often mentioned, the oracle said to Cræsus, "*Αὐδὲ ποδάβρι.*"

sides. The Persians crossed their hands on their breasts and prostrated themselves before the prince. When the preliminary formalities had been exchanged, Bartja, in accordance with the custom of his country, but to the surprise of the people who were unaccustomed to such a sight, kissed the yellow cheek of the Egyptian prince, who shuddered slightly at the touch of the impure lips of a stranger. Bartja then went with his guides to the litters which were waiting to carry him to the residence which had been appointed for him and his companions in the royal palace of Sais.

Some of the crowd hastened after the strangers; the greater part of the spectators remained in their places, as they knew that many a sight whose like they had never seen awaited them.

"Do you mean to follow those gay popinjays and other children of Typhon?" asked a discontented temple servant of his neighbour, an honest tailor of Sais.

"I tell you, Puhor, and the chief priest said so too; these intruders will bring nothing but misfortune to the black land. Where are the good old times when no foreigner who valued his life could put his foot on Egyptian soil? Now our streets are full of cheating Hebrews and, above all, of those insolent Greeks—may the gods destroy them. Look, that is already the third boatful of strangers. Do you know what these Persians are? The chief priest says that in all their country, which is as large as half the world, there is not a single temple for the gods, and instead of bestowing honourable funeral on the mummies of their dead, they leave them to be torn to pieces by dogs and vultures."¹

The tailor expressed great astonishment and still greater indignation; then he pointed to the landing-stage with his finger, and said: "As truly as the son of Isis destroyed Typhon, the sixth boatful is landing!"

¹ The Persians had no temples at the time of the Achæmenidæ, they had fire-altars, and exposed their dead to the dogs and vultures. As the body could not be burned or buried, since it would have desecrated the pure fire or the earth, burial places were constructed. They were covered with plaster and cement to a depth of four inches, and surrounded with ropes, which signified that they were suspended in the air without touching the ground.

"Yes, it is dreadful," sighed the temple servant. "You might almost think that a whole army was approaching. Amasis will go on like this till the strangers drive him from his throne and land, and enslave and plunder his unhappy people, as the evil Hyksos,¹ those accursed people and the black Ethiopians did formerly."

"The seventh boat," cried the tailor.

"May my lady Neith, the great goddess of Sais, destroy me, if I understand the king. He sent three baggage boats to that accursed nest of poison, Naucratis, to fetch the luggage and servants of the Persian embassy. Eight boats had to be provided instead of three, and besides kitchen utensils, dogs, horses, carriages, boxes, baskets, bundles, these despisers of the gods and scorners of the dead have dragged hither, for thousands of miles, a whole host of servants. There are said to be people among them who have nothing to do but to weave wreaths, or prepare ointments. They have also brought their priests, whom they call Magi. I should like to know what those idlers are here for. Of what use is a priest where neither gods nor temples are known?"

Amasis, the aged king of Egypt had received the Persian embassy soon after their arrival, with all the graciousness which was peculiar to him. Four days later when he had finished his work, to which he applied himself every morning without exception, he went for a walk with old Croesus in the palace gardens, while the rest of the Persians, accompanied by the crown prince, went for an excursion to Memphis.

The palace garden was royally magnificent, but still it resembled that of Rhodopis in its arrangements; it lay near the royal citadel, which was in the north-west of the town.

¹ Foreign rulers in Egypt whose origin it is difficult to determine. Certain interesting monuments found at Tanis in the Delta, representing kings with foreign faces devoted to the worship of Set (Typhon), prove their existence. Some of their names are preserved in the papyrus at Turin; and the Sallier Papyrus gives an account of the last period of their rule. The kings of the seventeenth dynasty opposed them. We think they were powerful Phœnician colonists, who were assisted by Arabs and tribes from Palestine. Eber's "*Ægypten und die Bücher Moses*," p. 198; Brugsch, "*Egypt under the Pharaohs*."

The two old men seated themselves in the shade of a broad sycamore, not far from a gigantic basin of red granite into which crocodiles of black basalt ejected a quantity of clear water from their wide-open jaws.

The dethroned king, though a few years older than the mighty ruler by his side, was by far the fresher and more vigorous of the two. Amasis' tall figure was bent, weak legs supported his strong body, his face was well formed, but covered with wrinkles, and his small sparkling eyes, betokened an active mind. A roguish, teasing, often mocking expression played perpetually round his full lips. The old man's low, broad forehead, and his large, well-shaped skull gave proof of his intelligence; the changing colour of his eye roused the conjecture that wit and passion were present in this strange man, who had worked his way up from a common soldier to the throne of the Pharaohs. His speech was incisive and harsh, his movements almost morbidly vivacious when compared with the stately manners of the other members of the Egyptian court.

His companion's bearing seemed altogether graceful and worthy of a king. His whole manner showed that he had enjoyed much intercourse with the best men of Greece, Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Bias of Priene,¹ Solon of Athens, Pittacus of Lesbos, the most celebrated sages of Greece had in happier days been guests at the court of Cræsus, in Sardes. His full, clear voice was like pure music when compared with Amasis' sharp tones.

"Now, tell me plainly," said the Pharaoh,² in fairly fluent Greek, "how you like Egypt? I know no one whose opinion I value as much as yours; for, in the first place, you know most of the nations and countries of the world, and, secondly, the gods have let you ascend and descend the whole ladder of fortune; thirdly, there must be a reason why you have been for so long a time the counsellor of the most powerful of kings. I wish you would like my land so much that you felt inclined to

¹ Bias, a philosopher of Ionic race, lived about 650 B.C., and was celebrated for the wisdom of his sayings and his decisions.

² In English, the Great House, the Sublime Porte; Egyptian, perāa.

remain here and be my brother. Truly, Cræsus, you have long been my friend, though it was but yesterday that the gods sent you to me."

"And you have been my friend," interrupted the Lydian. "I admire you for the courage with which you carry out what you consider good in defiance of those around you. I thank you for the favour with which you treat my friends, the Greeks. I look on you as my companion in fortune, for you too have passed through all the joy and happiness that life can bring."

"With this difference," said Amasis, smiling, "that we began at different ends. You received first the good, then the evil. It was otherwise with me; that is to say," he added thoughtfully, "if I acknowledge that my present good fortune makes me happy."

"And if," exclaimed Cræsus, "I grant that my so-called misfortunes cause me suffering."

"How can it be otherwise, after the loss of such great wealth?"

"Does happiness consist of wealth?" asked Cræsus. "Is happiness a possession? Happiness is merely a conception, an emotion which the envious gods give more often to the needy than to the powerful, whose clear glance is dazzled by glittering treasures, who must always suffer defeat, because, while conscious of their ability to obtain much, they are vanquished in the fight for the possession of that which they desire, but can never obtain."

Amasis sighed and said: "I wish I could contradict you, but when I think of my past, I must confess that the greatest troubles of my life began on the day which brought my reputed happiness."

"And I assure you," cried Cræsus, "that I am thankful your help came too late, for the hour of misfortune brought me my first unalloyed joy. When the first Persians mounted the walls of Sardes, I cursed myself and the gods; life seemed hateful to me, existence a curse. Fighting, I retreated with my men, despair in my heart. A Persian soldier raised his sword above my head. My dumb son Gyges caught the murderer's arm, terror loosened his tongue, and I heard him speak for the first time for years. In that dread hour my son, Gyges, had again

received the power of speech, and I, who had cursed the gods, now bowed before them. I took away the sword of the slave, whom I had ordered to kill me if I was taken by the Persians. I was a changed man, and gradually learnt to conquer the anger which was always starting up at the thought of my fate and of my noble foes. You know that I at last became the friend of Cyrus, that my son, whose full power of speech was restored, was allowed to grow up by my side, a free man. Whatever I had seen, or heard, or thought of, in my long life that was beautiful, I treasured up to bestow on him. He was henceforth my kingdom, my crown, my treasure. When I saw Cyrus' troubled days and sleepless nights, I trembled at the memory of my own former power and greatness; I saw more and more clearly where actual happiness was to be sought. Everyone bears it as a hidden germ in his heart. The contented, patient mind, which rejoices in all that is great and beautiful, but is also pleased with what is small, bears sorrow without complaint, and sweetens it by memory, moderation in all things, firm confidence in the favour of the gods and the certainty that the worst evil must pass by because everything is subject to change. All this matures the hidden germ of happiness in our hearts, and enables us to smile when the man who has not been trained by fate doubts and despairs."

Amasis listened attentively, while he drew figures in the sand with the head of the golden greyhound on his stick, and then said:

"Truly, Crœsus, I, 'the great god of justice, the son of Neith, the lord of military glory,'¹ as the Egyptians call me, I am tempted to envy you, despoiled and dethroned as you are. In former days I was as happy as you are now. All Egypt knew me, the poor son of a captain, because of my happy heart, my love of mischief, my light-heartedness, my gaiety. The common soldiers did whatever I wished. My superiors found much to blame in me, but much was excused in mad Amasis. My companions, the inferior officers of the army, could enjoy no festival without me.

¹ These were Amasis' titles; Rosellini, "*Monumenti dell'Egitto*," il. 149. All the Pharaohs had similar names, and were revered as gods.

My predecessor, Hophra, sent us against Cyrene. We were dying of want in the desert, and refused to proceed. The suspicion that the king wished to sacrifice us to the Greek mercenaries drove us to open revolt. Jestng, as usual, I cried to my friends: 'You won't manage without a king, so make me your ruler. You won't find a merrier one anywhere.' The soldiers heard my words. 'Amasis wishes to be our king,' was cried from corps to corps, from man to man. 'Good, happy Amasis shall be our king,' everyone shouted joyously, when a few hours had elapsed. An associate of my revels put the marshal's helmet on my head. I changed jest to earnest; the greater part of the army sided with me, and we beat Hophra at Momemphis. The people joined the conspiracy. I ascended the throne. I was called happy. Till then the friend of all Egyptians, I now became the enemy of their best men. The priests did homage to me, and admitted me into their caste, but only because they hoped to make me their tool. My former superiors envied me, or wished to associate with me as in former days. You can understand that this was not compatible with my new dignity, and that my new authority would have been undermined. One day, when the commanding officers of the army were feasting with me, and trying to joke with me as usual, I showed them a golden foot-pan, in which their feet had been washed before the meal. Five days later, when they again feasted with me, I had a golden statue of the great god Ra¹ placed on the table. As soon as they saw it they fell on their knees and worshipped.

¹ Ra was worshipped chiefly at Heliopolis, and must be considered the central figure in the solar worship of the Egyptians, which we consider to have formed the basis of their religion. The hawk was sacred to him. Most of the hymns in the Book of the Dead are addressed to him, and the obelisks were dedicated to him. He was looked on as the god of light, who directs all visible creation, while Osiris rules the spiritual world. Osiris, the "soul of Ra," wanders through this world as Ra, and every evening returns to his real home where he rules as Osiris. The Phoenix is connected with the worship of Ra. He came every 500 years from the land of palms (Eastern Phœnicia) to burn himself in the temple at Heliopolis, and arise more beautiful than ever from the ashes. This symbolises a period of 500 years, which, like the phœnix, are renewed out of themselves; their sixfold repetition determines the time needed by the soul to issue purified from its wanderings.

When all had risen, I seized the sceptre, held it on high solemnly, and cried: 'An artist made this divine image in five days from the despised vessel in which you spat, and in which your feet were washed. I myself was once such a vessel, but the divine power which can work with more speed and more skill than a goldsmith, made me your king. Kneel down before me, therefore, and do homage to me. Whoever is disobedient, or again forgets the reverence which he owes to the king, the representative of Ra on earth, is sentenced to death.' They all prostrated themselves; I had preserved my authority, but I had lost my friends. I still needed another firm support. I made use of the Greeks. A Greek is worth more than five Egyptians when it is a question of fighting. I knew it, and relying on this, I ventured to carry out what I thought wise.

"I was always surrounded by Greek mercenaries; I learnt their language from them; they introduced to me the noblest man I have ever met, Pythagoras. I strove to bring Greek art and Greek customs into Egypt, for I saw that it was foolish to cling to inferior customs while better things lay ready, only waiting to be planted in Egypt.

"I divided the whole land in a suitable manner, and organized the best police in the whole world; I accomplished much, but my highest aim, the introduction of the Greek spirit, the Greek sense of beauty, the Greek love of life, and free Greek art into this land which is so bright, luxurious, and yet so gloomy, was always wrecked on that rock which threatens me with ruin and destruction whenever I attempt any change. The priests are my opponents, my masters, a check on all my actions. These men, who cling with superstitious reverence to established forms, to whom all that is foreign is an abomination, who look on every stranger as the natural foe of their authority and their teaching, these men rule the most pious of nations with a power which is almost unlimited. This was the reason why I was forced to sacrifice my fairest plans to them; in obedience to their harsh precepts I must let my life pass away in slavery. I shall die unsatisfied, and not certain that this proud and angry

host of mediators between man and his gods, will grant me eternal rest in my grave."

"By our preserver Zeus, you poor, lucky man," interrupted Cræsus, in a sympathizing tone, "I understand your complaints. For though in the course of my long existence I have met individuals who passed through life gloomy and stern, I never thought there could be a whole great nation to whom gloomy hearts were given as the poison fangs to the snake. On my journey hither and at your court I have seen as many gloomy faces as I have met priests. I have rarely seen even the boys who wait on you smile, and gladness is wont to accompany youth as a fair gift of the gods, as flowers accompany spring."

"You would be mistaken if you thought all Egyptians were gloomy," returned Amasis. "It is true our religion demands that we should think seriously of death; but you will not easily find another nation that is equally fond of mocking jests, that when it once gives itself up to festive mirth, enjoys itself with such forgetfulness of self and such licentiousness. The priests hate the sight of you, and by their sullen behaviour they make me suffer for my alliance with you, the strangers. Those boys of whom you spoke, the sons of the highest priests, are the greatest plague of my life. They do the work of slaves for me, and obey my slightest sign. You would think that those who let their children perform such service would be the most obedient, respectful servants of their king, to whom they pay divine honours. But believe me, Cræsus, this very submission, which no ruler can refuse without giving offence, conceals a very subtle calculation. Each of these youths is my warder, my keeper. I cannot move my hand without their knowing it, and when I have moved it, in that same hour the priests hear of it."

"But how can you endure such an existence? Banish these spies from your presence, and choose your servants, from the military caste say. They cannot fail to become as useful to you as the priests."

"O that I could, that I dared!" cried Amasis, aloud. Then he continued in a lower tone, as if frightened at himself: "I think our conversation is being overheard."

To-morrow I will have the fig-trees yonder destroyed. That young priest, who seems fond of gardening, and who is picking figs which are barely ripe, cares for other fruit than those which he slowly places in his little basket. His hand gathers fruit, his ear the words from the mouth of his king."

"But by Father Zeus and Apollo——"

"I understand your astonishment and share it, but every privileged position has its duties, and as king of this land, which pays divine honour to all established customs, I must submit to the ancient court ceremonies of a thousand years, at least in the main points. If I tried to break my chains, it might be that they would leave my body unburied. You must know that the priests hold a court of justice over every corpse, and deprive those, whom they find guilty, of the peace of the grave. Consideration for my son would probably secure burial for me; but as regards the treatment which my body would receive from those who would have to attend to the sacrifices for the dead——"

"Why do you trouble about the grave?" Cræsus said, interrupting his friend impatiently. "We live for life, not death."

"Say, rather," returned Amasis, rising from his seat, "we who sympathize with the thoughts of the Greeks, consider a beautiful life the highest good; but, Cræsus, I was the child of an Egyptian father, I was nursed by an Egyptian mother, I was brought up on Egyptian food, and though I have adopted much that is Greek, I am still an Egyptian in my inmost heart. That which was sung to you in your childhood, which was proclaimed holy in your youth, that will live in your heart till you are swathed in mummy cloths. I am old, and I have but a short time left me before I reach the boundary beyond which lies the other life. Shall I, for the sake of those few days, destroy all hope for the thousands of years of death? No, my friend! I am still an Egyptian in the firm belief, which I share with each of my countrymen, that the welfare of my second life¹ depends on the preservation of

¹ The soul was looked on as a part of the world-soul Osiris, with which it united after death. One of the chief doctrines of the ancient

my body, the soul's carrier, if I am not yet thought worthy of mingling with the world-soul, and, myself a part of it, to help rule all creation as Osiris. But enough of these lofty matters, which I am forbidden by a solemn oath to reveal to you. Tell me, how do you like our temples and pyramids?"

Cræsus answered thoughtfully :

"The masses of stone which form the pyramids appear to me as if the vast desert had created them; the gay colonnades of the temples seem to be the work of a luxuriant spring. The sphinxes which lead to the doors show the way to the sanctuary, but the sloping, fortress-like walls of the pylones seem placed there to repulse you. The gay hieroglyphics tempt the eye, but their mystery repels the mind. The pictures of your multiform gods are present everywhere; they force themselves irresistibly on the eye, and yet everyone feels that they mean something different from what they represent, that they are only the visible symbols of deep thoughts comprehended by few. My curiosity is aroused everywhere, my interest awakened, but my strong sense of what is beautiful and pleasant is nowhere attracted and satisfied. My spirit would like to penetrate the mysteries of your wise men, but my heart and mind must remain strangers to the fundamental doctrines on which your thoughts, actions, and existence are based, and which seem to teach that life is to be looked on as a short pilgrimage to death, and death as the real, true life."

"And yet we recognise the true worth of life which is made beautiful by gay festivals, and we fear the terrors of the grave, we try to avoid death wherever it appears. Our physicians would not be so famous and respected if we did not think that they possessed the art of prolonging our earthly existence. But that reminds me of the oculist, Nebenchari, whom I sent to the king at Susa. Is he a good physician? Are you satisfied with him?"

"Such men do honour to the science of your country,"

Egyptian religion was the preservation of the body after death, in order to ensure the speedy release of the soul and its future union with the source of light and goodness. For some time the soul is still bound to the body in a certain measure.

returned Croesus. "It was Nebenchari who drew Cambyse's attention to your daughter's beauty. He has cured many blind people, but unfortunately the king's mother is still deprived of sight. We are sorry that such a skilled man only understands the eyes. When Princess Atossa had the fever, we could not persuade him to prescribe for her."

"That is quite natural, for our doctors are allowed to treat only one part of the body. We have aurists, dentists, oculists, surgeons, and physicians for internal diseases. According to the old laws of the priests, no dentist may treat a deaf man, no bonesetter may attend a man who suffers from an internal disease, though he may understand the treatment perfectly well. These laws are intended to bring about great accuracy. The priests, to whose caste the physicians belong, cultivate science with most praiseworthy attention. Yonder lies the house of the chief priest, Neithotep, whose knowledge of astronomy and geometry even Pythagoras praised highly. It is next to the hall which leads to the temple of the goddess Neith, the patroness of Sais. I wish I might show you the sacred grove with its splendid trees, the costly pillars of the sanctuary, with their capitals shaped like lotus flowers, the colossal chapel of granite which I had made at Elephantine out of a single block of stone, in order to dedicate it to the goddess. The priests unfortunately asked me to bring even you no further than the outer walls and pylones of the temples. Come let us seek my wife and daughters, for they like you, and I wish that you should feel friendly towards the poor girl before you go with her to the distant land, and the strangers whose queen she is to be. You will watch over her, will you not?"

"Rely on me," answered Croesus, clasping Amasis' hand. "I will help your Nitetis as a father, and she will need my help, for the women's apartments in the Persian palace are but slippery ground to walk on. She will, however, be treated with great consideration. Cambyse may well be satisfied with his choice, and he will value the fact highly that you confide your fair child to him; for though Tachot is not inferior in charm to Nitetis, she wants the majesty which distinguishes her

sister, and well befits the future queen of Persia. Nebenchari only spoke of your daughter Tachot."

"Nevertheless I shall send my beautiful Nitetis. Tachot is so delicate, that she could scarcely bear the fatigue of the journey, and the grief of parting. If I obeyed the dictates of my heart, Nitetis should not go to Persia either. But Egypt needs peace. I was a king before I was a father."

CHAPTER V

A BANQUET AT COURT.

THE remaining members of the Persian embassy had returned to Sais after their sail on the Nile as far as the pyramids, with the exception of Prexaspes, the ambassador of Cambyses, who was already on his way back to Persia to inform the king of the success of his mission.

The palace of Amasis was full of life. The retinue of Cambyses' embassy, which consisted of nearly three hundred men, and the distinguished guests, to whom every possible attention was shown, filled all the rooms in the great palace of Sais. The courtyard was crowded with the bodyguard, dignitaries, young priests and slaves, clad in rich festive garments. The king was anxious to display the wealth and magnificence of his court at a particularly splendid feast given that day in honour of his daughter's betrothal.

The lofty reception-hall facing the garden, was supported by coloured columns, the blue ceiling was adorned by rich paintings, and the whole formed an enchanting picture. Lamps of coloured papyrus, that gave forth a strange light, not unlike the sunlight when it shines through coloured windows, were suspended from the walls and pillars, which were richly ornamented with pictures and hieroglyphics. The spaces between the walls and pillars were filled with choice plants, such as palms, oleanders, roses, pomegranate and orange trees; concealed behind them was an invisible host of flute and harp players, who received the guests with solemn, monotonous music.

In the middle of the room, on the black and white tiles, stood dainty tables covered with cold joints, sweets, baskets

of fruit and cake carefully arranged, golden winejugs, glass goblets, and beautiful vases of flowers. A number of splendidly dressed slaves bustled about the tables, and in obedience to the directions of the steward, handed the refreshments to the guests, who conversed together either standing, or seated in costly armchairs.

The company consisted of men and women of all ages. Young priests, the personal attendants of the king, offered dainty nosegays to the women as they entered, and many a noble youth appeared with flowers, which he not only presented to his chosen lady in the course of the entertainment, but even held close to her nose.

The Egyptians were dressed as they were at the reception of the Persian embassy, they behaved politely, almost deferentially to the women, among whom there were few of striking beauty. Many had almond-shaped eyes, the charm of which was increased by the dye called *mostem*, which was used to colour the rims. Most of the ladies wore their hair arranged in the same fashion. It was pushed behind the ears, so that the abundant, artificially curled locks streamed down the back, leaving enough to form two plaits, which hung on either side between the eye and ear and reached to the bosom. A broad diadem confined the hair which, as the maids knew, was as often the work of the hairdresser as of nature. Many of the court ladies wore a lotus flower across their parting, the stalk of which lay against the back of the head.

They held fans of coloured feathers in their delicate hands, which were covered with rings, and the nails of which were dyed red in accordance with the Egyptian fashion. They wore gold and silver bracelets round the upper arm, the wrist, and the ankles.

The dresses of the Egyptian women were both beautiful and costly, and this was chiefly due to the fineness of the delicate materials, which were almost transparent, and which were sometimes cut so as to leave bare the right breast.

The young Persian prince, Bartja, was most distinguished by beauty and grace among the men, and Nitetis, the daughter of the Pharaoh, was the loveliest of the Egyptian women. The royal maiden in a transparent pink dress, with fresh roses in her black hair, pale as the lotus flower

which adorned her mother's head, walked by the side of her sister, who was dressed like her.

Queen Ladice, a Greek by birth, daughter of Battus, of Cyrene, walked beside Amasis, and led the young Persians to her children. A light lace garment covered the purple material of her dress, which was interwoven with gold. She wore on her beautiful Grecian head the head-dress of the Egyptian queens, adorned by a golden uræus snake.¹ Her face was both noble and benevolent, and every movement betrayed that she possessed that grace which a Greek education alone could give.

Amasis had chosen this woman as his queen, after the death of his second wife, the Egyptian Tentcheta, the mother of prince Psamtik, because of his prejudice in favour of the Greeks, and in spite of the priests' opposition.

Tachot and Nitetis, the two girls by the side of Ladice, were called twin sisters, but they showed no traces of that resemblance which is usually found in twins.

Tachot was fair and blue-eyed,² small and delicately made, while Nitetis was tall and full in figure, with black hair and eyes; her every movement showed that she was sprung from royal blood.

"How pale you look, my daughter," said Ladice, kissing Nitetis' cheek. "Be happy and await the future calmly. I bring you the brother of your future husband, noble Bartja."

Nitetis raised her thoughtful, dark eyes, and let them rest with long scrutiny on the beautiful youth. He bowed low, kissed the garment of the blushing girl and said:

"I salute you as my queen and sister. I can easily believe that you are depressed at the thought of leaving home, parents, brother, and sister, but be of good courage, for your husband is a great hero and a mighty king. Our mother Cassandane, the noblest of women, the personification of womanly beauty and virtue, is honoured by the Persians like the rays of the sun that gives us life. I must crave your pardon, sister of the lily Nitetis,

¹ The mark of royal dignity, which is found on the head-dresses of all the kings and queens of Egypt.

² It is certain that there were fair Egyptians. In Rosellini, "Mon. Stor.," plate xix., there is a picture of a fair princess.

that we come to rob you, whom I might call the rose in comparison with her, of your dearest friend."

At these words the youth looked into the eyes of beautiful Tachot, who laid her hand on her heart and bowed. She followed Bartja with her eyes long after Amasis had led him away to a chair opposite the dancing girls, who began to display their skill for the amusement of the guests. These girls wore only a light skirt, and turned and twisted their supple limbs to the tune of the harps and tambourines. Then Egyptian singers sang, and jesters uttered merry jests.

At last some of the courtiers forgetting their solemn demeanour in their intoxication, left the hall. The women were fetched by slaves with torches, and went home in coloured litters. Only the military commanders, the Persian ambassadors, and a few dignitaries, special friends of Amasis, were detained by the chief steward, and led into a splendidly furnished room, where a table was prepared in Greek fashion, on which a gigantic bowl for mixing the wine invited to a nightly carouse.

Amasis sat in a high arm-chair, at the head of the table; young Bartja was on his left, grey-haired Cræsus on his right. Besides these two and the confidants of the Pharaoh, Theodorus and Ibycus, the friends of Polycrates, whom we already know, were among the guests. Aristomachus, the new commander of the Greek body-guard, was also present.

Amasis, who a short time ago had been engaged in such serious conversation with Cræsus, was now ready with jests. He seemed to have become once more the wild lieutenant, the mad boon companion of former days.

Full of sparkling wit, teasing and scoffing, he joked and jested with his companions at the revel. Loud laughter, often perhaps forced, in honour of the royal wit, greeted his jests. Cup after cup was emptied, and the joy reached its height when the steward appeared with a small gilt mummy, and showed it to the company, crying: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for all too soon you will be like this."¹

¹ Some of these mummies are extant. See Wilkinson, ii. 410. The Greeks of Alexandria seem to have improved on the custom, and handed round a winged genius of death.

"Is it your custom to remind one of death, at your banquets?" asked Bartja, becoming grave; "or is it only a jest of your steward for the occasion?"

"It has always been the custom," answered Amasis, "to introduce these mummies, in order to increase the reveller's mirth, and remind the drinkers that they must enjoy themselves while there is time. You, young butterfly, have certainly many years of joy before you, but we old people, friend Cræsus, must do our best now. Cup-bearer, fill our goblets quickly, that not a moment of life may pass uselessly. How you can drink, golden-haired Persian! Truly the gods have given you a throat that is as good as your eyes are beautiful, and your charms fresh. Let me kiss you, you splendid youth! You bad boy! What do you think, Cræsus? My daughter Tachot speaks of nothing but this beardless boy, who seems to have turned her head, first with his beautiful eyes, and then with his saucy words. Well, you need not blush, young madcap. A man like you may, I suppose, pay attention to royal maidens, but if you were your father, Cyrus himself, I should not let Tachot go to Persia."

"Father," whispered prince Psamtik, interrupting him, "father, take heed of your tongue, and remember Phanes." The king looked darkly at his son, and, as if his joyous mood had been suddenly checked, he henceforth joined little in the conversation, which now became general.

Aristomachus, who sat opposite Cræsus, had till now kept his eyes fixed on the Persians without speaking, or laughing at Amasis' jests. When the Pharaoh grew silent, he turned eagerly to Cræsus, and said: "I should like to know, Lydian, if the snow lay on the mountains when you left Persia?"

Cræsus, astonished at this strange address, answered smiling: "Most of the heights of the Persian mountains were covered with verdure when we left Persia four months ago, but there are heights in the land of Cambyzes where the snow does not melt even in the hottest seasons, and we saw them gleam white when we descended into the plain."

The Spartan's face brightened visibly. Cræsus, who liked the grave man, asked him his name.

"I am called Aristomachus."

"I should know that name?"

"You knew many Greeks, and many bear my name."

"To judge from your accent you must be a Dorian. Are you not a Spartan?"

"I was."

"You are so no longer?"

"He who leaves his country without permission has forfeited his life."

"Did you leave your home of your own accord?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"To escape disgrace."

"What had you done?"

"Nothing."

"Then you were falsely accused of a crime?"

"Yes."

"Who was the cause of your misfortune?"

"You!"

Croesus sprang from his seat. The grave voice and stern face of the Spartan forbade every thought of jest. The neighbours of the two men, who had listened to the strange conversation, were frightened, and begged Aristomachus to explain his remarkable accusation.

The Spartan hesitated. It was evident that he was unwilling to speak, but when the king also desired him to tell his story, he began:

"Croesus, in obedience to the oracle, you chose the Lacedæmonians, the most powerful Greeks, as your allies against the Persian might; and gave us gold for the Hermes of Apollo on Mount Thornax. The ephors, therefore, decided to give you a huge bronze bowl of artistic workmanship in exchange. I was chosen to bring it to you. Before we reached Sardes a storm destroyed our ship. The bowl sank with it. We barely escaped with our lives to Samos. When we returned I was accused by enemies and envious people of having sold the ship and bowl to Samian merchants. As they could not convict me, and yet wished to ruin me, I was condemned to stand for two days and two nights in the pillory. At night my foot was fastened to the post of shame. Before the day of my dishonour

dawned, my brother came to me, and secretly brought me a sword. I was to kill myself because of this insult. I could not die, for I had yet to seek vengeance on those who ruined me. I therefore cut off my chained foot myself, and hid in the reeds of the Eurotas. My brother secretly brought me food and drink. In two months I was able to walk with this wooden foot. Far-reaching Apollo undertook my vengeance. My bitterest foes died of the plague. In spite of their death I was not allowed to return. At Gythium I at last took ship, in order to go to Sardes, and fight with you, Cræsus, against the Persians. When I landed at Teos, I heard you were no longer king. Mighty Cyrus, the father of this beautiful youth, had in a few short weeks conquered powerful Lydia, and made the richest of kings a beggar."

All the revellers looked admiringly at the grave warrior. Cræsus shook his hard right hand, and young Bartja cried, "Truly, Spartan, I should like to take you to Susa, to show my friends what I have seen, the bravest and most honourable of men."

"Believe me, boy," returned Aristomachus, smiling, "every Spartan would have acted as I did. In our country more courage is required to be a coward than to be brave."

"Would you," cried Darius, cousin of the king of Persia, "have borne to stand in the pillory, Bartja?"

Bartja coloured, but his face showed that he, too, would prefer death to shame.

"And you, Zopyrus," asked Darius, turning to the third of the young Persians.

"I would mutilate myself merely for love of you," cried he, and pressed his friends' hands under the table.

Psamtik watched the young heroes with a mocking smile. Cræsus, Gyges, and Amasis looked on with satisfaction, and the Spartan smiled with pleasure.

Ibycus now told of the oracle which promised Aristomachus that the time for his return home would be near, when men came from the snow-clad mountains, and he also mentioned Rhodopis' house.

Psamtik became restless when he heard this name pronounced. Cræsus expressed his desire to become acquainted

with the aged Thracian, of whom Æsop had told him much, and when the guests had left the hall, most of them perfectly intoxicated, the dethroned king, the poet, the sculptor, and the Spartan hero arranged to go to Naucratis the following day and enjoy Rhodopis' conversation.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER AND SON.

KING AMASIS allowed himself barely three hours' rest after the feast we have described. As usual, the young priests waked him from slumber as soon as the cock crowed; they led him to his bath, attired him in the royal robes of state, and conducted him to the altar, in the court-yard of the palace, where he sacrificed before the eyes of the people, while the chief priests sang prayers with a loud voice, enumerated the virtues of the king, and, in order to remove all blame from the head of the ruler, made his evil counsellors responsible for all sins committed in ignorance by him.

The priests exhorted him, as usual, to follow what was good, while they extolled his virtues, read to him the useful deeds and the advice of great men from the holy writings, and then led him to his apartments, where letters and reports from all parts of the land awaited him.

Amasis was accustomed to adhere closely to these ceremonies and hours of work, while he spent the rest of the day as he liked, generally in pleasant society.

The priests, therefore, accused him of living an unkingly life, but on one occasion he answered the angry chief priest: "Behold this bow. If you keep it bent, it will soon lose its strength; use it half a day and then give it rest and it will remain strong and useful till the string breaks."

Amasis had just signed his last letter, granting the petition of a nomarch,¹ who asked for money for several embankments,² which the floods had rendered necessary, when

¹ The governors of the provinces or nomes of Egypt.

² The peculiar character of the Nile necessitated the construction of embankments. The Pharaohs considered it an honour to attend to their preservation.

a servant announced that prince Psamtik begged his father to grant him a few minutes' audience.

Amasis, who, pleased at the favourable reports from all parts of the land, had welcomed the servant cheerfully on his entrance, now suddenly grew grave and thoughtful. At length after a long pause he cried: "Go and tell the prince he may enter."

Psamtik, pale and stern as ever, bowed low and reverently on crossing his father's threshold.

Amasis thanked him by a silent nod, then he said shortly and sternly: "What do you want of me? my time is limited."

"Especially for your son," returned the prince with trembling lips. "Seven times have I asked you for the great favour which at last you grant to-day."

"No reproaches. I can guess the cause of your coming. I am to clear up your doubts as to Nitetis' descent."

"I am not curious. I have come rather to warn you, and remind you that another lives beside myself who knows the secret."

"Phanes?"

"Who else? He is exiled from his home and from Egypt, and will leave Naucratis in a few days. What guarantee have you that he will not betray us to the Persians?"

"The kindness and friendship I always showed him."

"Then you believe in men's gratitude?"

"No; but I trust my power of judging them. Phanes will not betray us. I repeat it, he is my friend."

"Your friend, perhaps, but my mortal enemy."

"Then beware of him. I need not fear him."

"Not you, but our country. Consider, father, that though you may hate me as your son, you must care for me as Egypt's future ruler. Consider that after your death—may the gods long prevent it—I shall represent the present of this glorious land as you do now, and that my fall in the future will mean the destruction of your house, and Egypt's ruin."

Amasis became graver, while Psamtik continued more impressively: "You will, you must agree with me. This Phanes has it in his power to betray our land to every foe, for he knows it as well as you or I. In his breast there

sleeps a secret which, if revealed, will make our mightiest friend our most terrible foe."

"You are mistaken. Nitetis is certainly not my daughter, but yet she is the daughter of a king, and will know how to win her husband's heart."

"Were she the daughter of a god, Cambyzes would become your foe if he discovered the secret, for you know a lie is the greatest of crimes among the Persians, and they consider it disgraceful to be deceived. But you have deceived the proudest and mightiest among them, and what can one inexperienced girl do when a hundred women, skilled in cunning, strive to win their ruler's favour?"

"Has eloquence a better master than hate and vengeance?" asked Amasis in a cutting voice. "Foolish boy, do you think that I undertook so dangerous a game without bestowing mature consideration on all circumstances? Let Phanes tell the Persians to-day what he does not even know, what he only guesses, and can never prove. I, the father, Ladice, the mother, must surely know best who is our child. We both call Nitetis our daughter—who can affirm that she is not? If Phanes wishes to betray the weakness of our land to another foe than the Persian, let him do so, I fear no one. If you wish to incite me to ruin a man to whom I owe much gratitude, a friend who served me faithfully for ten years before he offended me, I tell you that instead of harming him, I am ready to protect him from your vengeance, the impure origin of which I know."

"My father!"

"You would like to ruin this man because he prevented you from taking by force the grandchild of the Thracian, Rhodopis, of Naucratis; because when I found you unfitted for the post, I appointed him commander-in-chief in your place. You turn pale. I am indeed grateful to Phanes, that he acquainted me with your shameful plans, and thus gave me an opportunity of drawing closer to me those men who form the support of my throne, and who esteem Rhodopis highly."

"Oh, father, that you should speak like this of the strangers, that you should thus forget the ancient glory of Egypt! Insult me if you like, I know you do not love

me, but do not say that we need the stranger in order to become great. Look back at our history. When were we greatest? In the days when we closed our land against all strangers, without exception, and, standing on our own feet, trusting to our own strength, lived according to the ancient laws of our fathers and our gods. Those days saw Ramses the Great¹ subdue the most distant races with our victorious arms. Those days heard Egypt called the first and greatest country of the world. What are we now? I hear the king's lips call foreign beggars and adventurers the support of the throne. I see you, the king, plan a miserable stratagem to gain the friendship of a race, over whom we won glorious victories before the strangers came to the Nile. Egypt was a mighty queen in beautiful raiment, now she is but a painted harlot decked in golden tinsel."

"Take care what you say," cried Amasis, stamping his foot. "Egypt was never as flourishing and great as now. Ramses carried our weapons to distant countries, and won blood with them, but I have brought matters to such a point, that the productions of our hands are sent to all ends of the world, and bring us wealth and blessing instead of blood. Ramses caused the blood and sweat of his subjects to flow in streams for the glory of his name. I have brought it about that blood is shed but seldom in my land, while men sweat in useful work alone; every citizen can accomplish his journey through life in safety, happiness, and prosperity. Ten thousand well populated towns² stand on the shores of the Nile; not a foot of ground is left uncultivated, not a child in Egypt is deprived of the blessings of law and justice, no criminal can escape the watchful eye of the magistrate. If a foe should attack us, well, we have not only our fortresses and the cataracts, the sea and the desert which the gods gave us as bulwarks, but we have also the best soldiers that ever bore arms; three thousand Greeks, and the Egyptian military caste stand ready to protect us. That is how matters are situated in Egypt. She gave Ramses tears of blood in

¹ Ramses, called Sesostris by the Greeks, reigned 1394-28 B.C. He erected the obelisk which is now in Paris.

² Herod., ii. 177.

return for his tawdry and idle fame. The pure gold of true happiness and peaceful prosperity she owes to me and my predecessors the Saitic kings."

"Nevertheless, I tell you," cried the prince, "that Egypt is a tree at whose core a destructive worm is gnawing. The strife and struggle for gold and splendour have debased all hearts. The luxury of the stranger has given the deathblow to our simple habits. Everything is to be bought for gold. We continually hear of Egyptians who, led astray by the Greeks, sneer at the ancient gods, while quarrels and disputes divide the castes of priest and soldier. Every day there are bloody quarrels between Greek mercenaries and Egyptian soldiers, between strangers and natives. One stone of the state mill rubs against the other, till the whole building will crumble to dust and ashes. Father, I shall never speak if I keep silence to-day, and I must at length say what oppresses my heart. During your quarrels with our venerable priesthood, the best support of the throne, you looked on calmly, while the young and vigorous Persian race rolled from east to west like a monster which swallows up nations, and becomes more dreadful and powerful after each meal. Instead of helping the Lydians and Babylonians as at first you intended, you helped the Greeks to build temples to their false gods. When, at length, all resistance seemed vain, when the Persians had subdued half the world, and full of power and invincible could demand of kings whatever they wished for, then the Immortals once more seemed desirous to help you to save Egypt. Cambyses desired your daughter, but you, too weak to sacrifice your child to the general welfare, send the great king a changeling; and weak as you are, you spare a stranger who holds the weal or woe of the land in his hand, and will ruin the realm, if it does not before then fall to pieces, destroyed by internal quarrels."

Till now Amasis, pale and trembling with rage, had allowed his son to insult all that he loved best. He could keep silence no longer, and cried in a voice that resounded like a trumpet-blast through the great hall: "Do you know whose existence I should sacrifice, if the life of my children and the preservation of the dynasty which I founded were not dearer to me than the weal of this land?"

Do you know, you boastful, revengeful son of misfortune, who is the future destroyer of this glorious, ancient realm? It is you, Psamtik, you, the man marked by the gods, feared by man, whose heart knows no love, whose breast knows no friendship, whose face knows no smile, whose soul is incapable of feeling for another. The curse of the gods has given you your unhappy nature, the enmity of the Immortals will ruin what you undertake. Now listen, for I must sooner or later tell you what my paternal weakness concealed from you so long. I had overthrown my predecessor and forced him to give me his sister, Tentcheta, as my wife. She learned to love me, and a year after our marriage gave promise of a child. In the night which preceded your birth, I slept by the side of my wife's bed. I dreamt that your mother lay on the shore of the Nile. She complained of a pain in her breast. I bent over her, and saw that a cypress was growing from her heart. The tree became larger and larger, broader and darker; its roots wound themselves round your mother and smothered her. A cold shudder seized me. I wished to flee. Suddenly a terrible hurricane came from the east and threw down the cypress, so that its great branches struck the Nile. Then the river ceased to flow, its waters grew hard, and instead of the stream a gigantic mummy lay before me. The towns of the Nile contracted, and became great funeral urns, which surrounded the corpse of the Nile as in a grave. Then I awoke and sent for the soothsayers. None could explain my dream till the priests of the Lybian Ammon gave me the following interpretation:—"Tentcheta will be killed by the birth of her son. He, a gloomy, accursed man, is represented by the cypress which killed its mother. In his reign a nation from the east will turn the Nile, that is, the Egyptians, to corpses, and their towns to ruins, these are the funeral urns."

Psamtik stood like a statue before his father, who continued: "Your mother died at your birth. Fiery red hair, the mark of the sons of Typhon,¹ grew on your temples.

¹ Typhon (Egyptian, Seth), the god of evil. He was at first the god of war and of foreign countries. Ramses worshipped him, later princes erased his name wherever they found it, and he was looked on as the principle of destruction. He represents the destroying forces of nature,

You became a gloomy man; misfortune pursued you, for it robbed you of a loved wife and dear children. I was born under the fortunate star of Ammon; you, the astrologers calculated, were born when the dreadful planet Seb rose."

Amasis stopped, for Psamtik, overcome by the terrible things he had heard, and sobbing violently, broke down, and groaned out the words: "Cease, cruel father, and at least conceal the fact that I am the only son in Egypt whose father persecutes him without cause."

Amasis looked down on the pale man, who had hidden his face in the folds of his garment, and fallen on his knees before him. His quickly roused anger gave way to pity. He knew that he had been too hard, that his tale had aimed a poisoned arrow at Psamtik's heart; he thought of the mother of the unhappy man, his wife, who died forty years ago. He felt what he had not felt for a long while, that he was a father whose duty it was to comfort this gloomy man, who rejected all signs of affection, who was a stranger to him in all his views. It was the first time that the tender-hearted king was called upon to dry the tears of his son, who was wont to be so cold. He eagerly seized the opportunity. He bent over the groaning man, kissed his brow, raised him, and said gently:

"Pardon my violence, my son. The words which hurt you came from the jaws of wrath, not from the heart of Amasis. For many years you have irritated me by coldness, hardness, and obstinacy. To-day you trampled on my holiest feelings, and I was carried away by uncontrollable violence. Now all shall again be well between you and me; though we are too different ever to become truly united at heart, let us henceforth be united in action, and give way to each other."

Psamtik bowed silently, and kissed his father's garment. "Not so," cried the king. "Kiss my mouth. That is right, that is how things should be between father and son. As to that mad dream, do not let it trouble you. Dreams

and all harmful plants and animals were dedicated to him. His colour was red, and it is said that in early times red-haired people were sacrificed to him. In later times red-haired people are said to have been pelted with mud and generally despised.

are deceptive, and even if they are really sent by the gods, those who interpret them are mortals, and are therefore fallible. Your hand still trembles. Your face is whiter than your linen garment. I was hard to you, harder than a father——”

“Harder than a stranger should be to a stranger,” interrupted the prince. “You have utterly crushed me. My face was seldom brightened by a smile; from henceforth it will be a mirror of misery.”

“Not so,” said Amasis, and laid his hand on his son’s shoulder. “Though I inflict wounds, I have the power to heal them. Tell me the dearest wish of your heart, and I will grant it.”

Psamtik’s eyes blazed, a red flush overspread his sallow face, and he answered, without an instant’s reflection, but with a voice which still trembled from the agitation his heart had experienced during the last moments: “Abandon to me Phanes, my foe.”

The king remained lost in thought for a little while, then he said: “I shall have to comply with your request, but I would rather you had asked half my possessions than this. My inmost heart tells me that I am about to do what is unworthy of me, and what will be the ruin of me, of you, of the realm, of everything. Reflect once more before you act, and I warn you, whatever you intend to do to Phanes, you must not touch a hair of Rhodopis’ head. Take care, too, that the persecution of my poor friend remains a secret, especially from the Greeks. Where shall I find another general, a counsellor, a companion like him? Phanes is not yet in your power, and I bid you remember that though you may be a clever Egyptian, Phanes is a clever Greek. I must also remind you of your oath to give up every thought of Rhodopis’ grand-daughter. I think I offer you a welcome substitute, for if I know you at all, vengeance is dearer to you than love. As to Egypt, I repeat it was never happier than now. No one but the discontented priests, and those who follow them, would think of declaring the contrary. You would like to learn the story of Nitetis’ birth. Harken, then; your own interest bids you keep the secret.”

Psamtik listened eagerly to his father’s story, and

thanked him when he had finished, with a warm pressure of the hand.

"Now farewell," said Amasis, bringing the interview with his son to a close. "Do not forget what I told you, and I must entreat you to shed no blood. Deal as you please with Phanes. I do not want to know what you intend to do, for I hate cruelty, and should not like to abhor my son. How glad you look! Poor Athenian, better for you had you never entered this land!"

When Psamtik left his father's hall the king walked up and down for a long while, lost in thought. He repented of having yielded, and it seemed to him as if he already saw Phanes, covered with blood, standing before him beside the shade of Hophra, whom he had overthrown. "But he might really ruin us," he said, trying to justify what he had done to himself. Then he shook himself, drew himself up to his full height, called his servants, and left the apartment cheerfully.

Had the light-hearted man, the child of fortune, really calmed the forebodings of his soul so quickly, or was he strong enough to hide with a smile the pain he suffered?

CHAPTER VII

SAIS.

WHEN Psamtik left his father's apartment, he went straight to the temple of the goddess Neith. At the entrance he asked for the chief priest. The servants bade him wait, for the great Neithotep was then praying to the mighty goddess of heaven in the Holy of Holies.

After a short time a young priest appeared, and announced that his master awaited the prince.

Psamtik at once left the cool place, which he had occupied in the shade of the white poplars of the sacred grove, on the shore of the pond dedicated to great Neith. He passed over the asphalte-covered stone pavement of the first court, on which the dazzling rays of the sun fell like fiery darts, and turned into one of the long sphinx avenues which led to the pylons¹ of the gigantic house of the goddess. Then he passed through the huge chief gate, which like the gates of all Egyptian temples, was ornamented with broad-winged sundisks.² On either side of the gates, which stood wide open, rose tower-like buildings, slender obelisks, and fluttering flags. He turned into the court, bounded on each side by colonnades, in the midst of which sacrifices were offered to the deity. The whole front of the actual building rose like a fortress, at an obtuse angle from the flags of the wide court, and was

¹ Disconnected gates with sloping walls which led to the Egyptian temples, and perhaps procured for the Thebes of Homer the name of "hundred gated."

² The inscriptions of Edfoo, published by Naville, show that Hor Hut (the Horus of Edfoo) overcame the evil one and his companions in the form of a winged sundisk. To commemorate his victory winged sundisks with uræus snakes were placed over all the doors of Egyptian temples and sanctuaries.

covered with coloured pictures and inscriptions. He entered through the porticos a lofty ante-chamber; then he came to a great hall, the blue ceiling of which, covered with thousands of gold stars, was supported by four rows of gigantic columns. The shafts and lotus-shaped capitals, the walls and niches of this gigantic hall, everything, in short, that met the eye was covered with hieroglyphics and bright colours. The pillars rose to an enormous height, the lofty hall stretched over an immeasurable space, the air which the worshipper inhaled was full of incense and the perfume of kyphi and of the fumes which penetrated from the laboratories. Soft music, produced by invisible artists, seemed to continue without pause, but it was now and then interrupted by the deep lowing of the sacred cows of Isis, or the harsh note of the hawk of Horus, whose dwelling was in the neighbouring hall. Whenever the solemn, prolonged lowing of the cow sounded, like distant thunder, or the shrill, startling cry of the hawk was heard, like a flash of lightning leaping from the earth to heaven, the crouching worshipper bent and touched with his forehead the stone flags of the court, which was surrounded by colonnades. They looked with timid awe towards the inner part of the temple, which was closed to them. In the sanctuary—hewn out of one stone and shaped like a chapel—stood numerous priests; some wore ostrich feathers on their bare heads, others had panther-skins over their shoulders which were covered with white drapery. Murmuring and singing, they bowed and raised themselves, swung censers, and poured clear water out of golden vessels as libations to the gods. In this gigantic hall, which was opened to the more privileged Egyptians only, man seemed a dwarf in his own eyes. His ear, his eye, even his lungs felt no influences of the outer world save those which were far removed from all that every-day life offered; these oppressed his breast, and made his nerves tremble. The agitated worshipper, transported out of actual life, was forced to seek a support outside himself. It was pointed out to him by the voice of the priest, and the mysterious music and the cries of the holy animals were looked upon as signs that expressed the nearness of the divinity.

After Psamtik, though unable to pray, had assumed the attitude of a worshipper on the low, golden, cushioned seat appointed for him, he proceeded to the hall already mentioned, which was lower and smaller, and in which the sacred cows of Isis-Neith, and the hawks of Horus were kept. A curtain of costly material, covered with gold embroidery, hid them from the eyes of the frequenters of the temple, for the sight of these revered creatures was seldom granted to the people, and then only from a distance. When Psamtik passed by, cakes soaked in milk, salt, and clover blossoms, were being placed in the golden manger of the cows, and gaily feathered little birds in the neatly worked cage of the hawk. In his present mood the prince paid no attention to these well-known objects. By means of a secret staircase he ascended to the rooms next to the observatory, in which the chief priest was accustomed to remain and to repose after divine service.

Neithotep, an old man of seventy years, sat on the purple cushions of a gilt armchair in a splendid room covered with thick Babylonian carpets. His foot rested on a skilfully carved stool. In his hands he held a scroll covered with hieroglyphics. Behind him stood a boy, who kept all insects from him with a fan of ostrich feathers.

The face of the old priest was full of furrows, but he must have been handsome once. His large blue eye bespoke a keen intellect and dignified self-consciousness.

Neithotep had laid aside his artificial curls. The bald, shining skull formed a strange contrast to the furrowed face, and made the forehead, which among the Egyptians was generally low, seem unusually high. The room, on whose walls thousands of texts were painted in hieroglyphics, the various, coloured statues of the goddess which stood there, the snowy white of the priest's robe, could not fail to make a solemn and strange impression on the stranger.

The old man welcomed the prince very heartily and asked:

"What brings my illustrious son to the poor servant of the goddess?"

"I have much to tell you, my father," returned

Psamtik, smiling triumphantly, "for I have just come from Amasis."

"He has probably listened to you at last?"

"At last."

"Your face tells me that our lord, your father, received you graciously."

"After I had experienced his wrath. When I told him the wish you had charged me to utter, he became exceedingly angry, and almost annihilated me with terrible words."

"You must have hurt him. Or did you approach the king as a son who came petitioning humbly, as I advised you?"

"No, my father, I was irritated and angry."

"Then Amasis was right to be displeased, for it is never seemly for a son to meet his father with anger, least of all when about to ask a favour. You know the command: 'Whoso honoureth his father shall have long life.' See, my pupil, you have always failed because you have sought to carry out by sullen violence, what could easily be attained by kindness and gentleness. A kind word is far more effective than an angry one, and much depends on how you manage your speech. Listen to what I will tell you. Many years ago King Snefru ruled Egypt from Memphis. One day he dreamed that all his teeth fell from his mouth. He at once sent for a soothsayer, and told him his dream. The man cried out: 'O king! woe to you, all your relations will die before you.' Snefru was angry, and ordered that the messenger of evil should be whipped. He sent for a second prophet, who explained the dream thus: 'Great king, hail to your name, for you will live longer than all your relations.' The king smiled at these words, and gave presents to this soothsayer, for though he had given him the same explanation as the first man, he had known how to express himself in better language. Do you understand the force of my story? Try in future to give a more agreeable form to your words, for your manner of speaking is as important as the matter, especially before a ruler."

"Oh my father, how often you have given me this advice; how often I perceived that my rough words and angry gestures injured me. I cannot alter my manner, I cannot——"

"Say, rather, I will not, for he who is truly a man must never do again what he has done once, and then repented of. But this is enough advice. Tell me have you soothed Amasis' anger?"

"You know, my father; when he saw that his dreadful words had wounded me to my inmost soul, he regretted his passion. He felt that he had hurt me too much, and wished to atone for his harshness at any price."

"He has a noble heart, but his mind is infatuated and his sense prejudiced," cried the priest. "What could not Amasis be for Egypt, if he would but listen to our counsel, and the commands of the gods?"

"He was much moved, and at last granted me—you hear me, father—he granted me the life of Phanes."

"How your eyes sparkle! That is not right, Psamtik. The Athenian must die because he offended the gods; the judge must let severity take its course, but he must grieve, not rejoice at the misfortune of the condemned. Now tell me, what else did you obtain?"

"The king told me from what house Nitetis is sprung."

"Nothing further?"

"No, my father, but are you not anxious to hear?"

"Curiosity is the vice of women; besides, I have long known all that you can tell me."

"But yesterday you urged me to question my father."

"Because I wished to prove you, in order to see whether you can resign yourself to the command of the gods, and wander on that path which alone can make you worthy of initiation into the highest grade of wisdom. I hear that you tell us honestly what you learn, and see that you understand how to obey, the first virtue of a priest."

"Then you know who is Nitetis' father?"

"I myself uttered the prayers at King Hophra's grave."

"But who betrayed the secret to you?"

"The eternal stars, my son, and my skill in reading the book of heaven."

"And do these stars never lie?"

"They never deceive the man who truly understands them."

Psamtik turned pale. The dream of his father, and his terrible horoscope appeared before him, images of

terror. The priest saw at once the change in the prince's face and said: "You are thinking of the unlucky signs in heaven at your birth, and think you are lost, but be comforted, Psamtik; the astrologers at that time overlooked a constellation which did not escape my eyes. Your horoscope was bad, very bad, but it may turn to good, it may——"

"O speak, father, speak!"

"It must turn to good if you forget everything else, and live solely for the gods, and give unqualified obedience to their voice, which we alone hear in the sanctuary."

"Command, my father, and I will obey."

"May great Neith, the goddess of Sais, grant that," cried the priest solemnly.

"But now, my son," he added, in a friendly voice, "leave me alone, for I am weary with long praying and the burden of my years. If it is possible to delay the death of Phanes, I should like to speak to him before he dies. Another thing, a troop of Ethiopians arrived here yesterday. These people understand neither Egyptian nor Greek. If they are commanded by a faithful man, who knows the Athenian and the place, they will be suited to rid us of the condemned man, for their ignorance of the language and circumstances will prevent betrayal or gossip. They must know nothing of the object of their journey before their departure for Naucratis, and when the deed is done, we will send them back to Ethiopia. Remember that a secret known to more than one is already half betrayed. Farewell."

Psamtik left the old man's room. A few minutes later a young priest, a servant of the king, entered and asked the priest: "Did I listen well, father?"

"Excellently my son. Nothing escaped you, that Amasis said to Psamtik. May Isis preserve your hearing."

"Why, father, a deaf man must have heard every word in the adjoining room, for the king roared like a bull."

"Great Neith has afflicted him with imprudence. I command you to speak with more respect of the Pharaoh. Now go, and let me know at once if Amasis tries to prevent the attack on Phanes. You will always find me at home. Bid my servants refuse admittance to all visitors and say I

am praying in the sanctuary. May the unutterable deity guard your steps."

While Psamtik was making his arrangements for capturing Phanes, Croesus and his companions embarked in a royal barge to go to Naucratis and spend the evening with Rhodopis.

His son Gyges and the three young Persians remained in Sais; they were greatly pleased with the town.

Amasis overwhelmed them with kindness, and, in accordance with Egyptian custom, allowed them to associate freely with his wife and the twin sisters, as they were called. He taught Gyges to play at draughts, and was unwearied in jest and mirth, when he looked on, while the strong, active young heroes joined his daughters in throwing balls and hoops, a favourite amusement of Egyptian girls.

"Truly," cried Bartja, after Nitetis had caught a slender hoop, ornamented with coloured ribbons, on her thin ivory stick for the hundredth time without missing, "we must introduce this game at home. We Persians are not like you Egyptians, we love everything new and foreign as much as you seem to hate it. I will tell our mother, Cassandane, about it, and she will gladly allow my brother's wives to amuse themselves with this game."

"Do so, do so," cried fair-haired Tachot, blushing deeply. "Nitetis will join the game and dream that she is at home once more with her loved ones. And you, Bartja," she added softly, "must think of this hour whenever you see the hoops flying."

The young Persian answered, smiling: "I shall never forget it." Then he cried aloud, turning gaily to his future sister-in-law: "Be of good cheer, Nitetis. You will like us better than you think. We Asiatics know how to honour beauty; we prove that by taking many wives."

Nitetis sighed, but Ladice, the king's wife, cried: "That just proves how little you understand a woman's nature. You cannot imagine, Bartja, what a woman feels when she sees the man who is more to her than life itself, for whom she would freely sacrifice all that is holy and dear to her, look down on her as he would on a beautiful toy, a splendid

horse, a work of art. And it is a thousand times harder still to share with a hundred others the love which you hoped to possess alone."

"There you see the jealous woman," said Amasis. "Does she not speak as though she had cause to complain of my fickleness?"

"Oh, no, my beloved," returned Ladice. "In this respect you Egyptians are superior to all men, for you remain faithful and constant to what you have once loved. Indeed, I can boldly assert, no woman is as happy as the wife of an Egyptian.¹ The Greeks know better than the Egyptians how to beautify life, but they do not know how to honour woman as she should be honoured. The majority of Greek girls spend a mournful youth in dull rooms, where mothers and overseers keep them at the spindle and the loom, and when they are grown up they are led to the quiet house of an unknown husband, who is so occupied with his private and public affairs that he can seldom enter the women's apartment. Only when the nearest friends and relations are with the husband, the wife approaches the men, and with all due timidity and shyness listens to what goes on in the world. Alas! the thirst for knowledge dwells in us, and our sex especially ought not to be deprived of knowledge of certain things, so that we may become our children's teachers. What can a Greek mother, who herself knows and hears nothing, transmit to her daughters but ignorance. Hence it happens that a Greek is seldom satisfied with his lawful wife, who is his intellectual inferior, and he goes to the Hetærae, who have learned much from their constant intercourse with the other sex, and know how to enliven their knowledge with the flowers of feminine grace and the salt of their wit, which is keener and more delicate than that of men. It is otherwise in Egypt. Here the grown girl is allowed to mix freely in the society of the best men. Numerous festivals enable

¹ Egyptian queens were more respected than even the kings, according to Diod. i. 27. The monuments show that women could ascend the throne, and the heiress to the throne raised her husband to the rank of king. Sons, when describing their descent, mentioned their mother more frequently than their father. Egyptian women were called "mistress" or "ruler of the house," and they were allowed to dispose freely of their own property.

youths and maidens to know and love each other. The woman instead of being her husband's slave is his friend. One supplements the other. The strongest decides in momentous questions, the smaller cares of life are left to the woman, who is always greatest in small matters. The daughters grow up under good discipline, for the mother is not without knowledge and experience. It is easier for the women to remain virtuous and domestic, for virtue and domesticity increase the happiness of him who belongs to her alone, whose most precious possession she esteems herself. You see, we women do only what we like. The Egyptians understand the art of managing us so, that we can only like what is good. Here on the Nile, Phocylides of Miletus and Hipponax of Ephesus would not have dared to compose insulting songs on us. Here the story of Pandora could never have been invented."

"How well you speak," cried Bartja. "I found Greek difficult to learn; now I am glad I did not give in, but listened attentively to Cræsus' teaching."

"Who are those wicked men who dared speak evil of women?" asked Darius.

"Two Greek poets," answered Amasis, "the boldest of men, for I would rather irritate a lioness than a woman. Listen to a specimen of the verses of Hipponax.

'Only upon two days can a woman truly rejoice you;
One is her wedding day, and one is the day when she's buried.'

"Stop, stop, you mischievous man," cried Ladice, stopping her ears. "You see, Persians, that is Amasis' way. He teazes and jests whenever he can, though he may agree perfectly with those at whom he is scoffing. There is no better husband than he——"

"And no worse wife than you," laughed Amasis, "for you actually lay me open to the suspicion of being a too obedient husband. Farewell, children, these young heroes must see Sais, but first I will tell them what that bad Simonides¹ says of the best woman.

'But like a bee the last: how blest the man
Who weds her, she alone is blameless aye.'

¹ Simonides of Amorgas lived about 650 B.C., and wrote many malicious poems against women, whom he compared with disagreeable animals. Only one who resembled the bee was good. The deformed poet, Hippo-

Beneath her care his substance ever grows,
 The household prospers : loving and beloved
 The pair grow old together ; goodly sons,
 Who call her mother, win them noble names.
 Great is her praise, beyond all else beside,
 And grace divine clings to her ; but whene'er
 The gossips sit, and gossip light goes round,
 She takes no joy therein. Such are the wives
 Zeus sends to bless their husbands, full of worth,
 Full of discretion.'

That is like my Ladice. Farewell."

"Not yet," cried Bartja. "I must first justify our poor Persia, for the encouragement of my future sister-in-law. But no; Darius, you must speak for me, for you understand the art of speaking as well as you understand calculations and the science of the sword."

"You make me out a chatterbox and a trader," returned the son of Hystaspes. "But be it so. I have long desired to defend the customs of our home. Know, then, Ladice, your daughter will certainly not be the slave of our king; she will be his friend, if Auramazda¹ incline his heart to what is good. In Persia, also, the king's wives are present at the table of the men, though certainly only on solemn occasions, and we are accustomed to show the greatest respect to wives and mothers. Tell me if you Egyptians can bestow a lovelier gift on your wives than was given by that king of Babylon who took a Persian woman for his wife. She was accustomed to the mountains of her home, and felt unhappy in the wide plains of the Euphrates, and grew ill with homesickness. What did the king do? He had a gigantic structure erected on lofty arches; its summit was covered with a mountain of fertile mould. On this he planted beautiful flowers and trees which were watered by an ingenious contrivance. When

nax of Ephesus, lived about 550. Phocylides of Miletus imitated Simonides in his writings. Translation by G. Scott, Esq., Merton College.

¹ Auramazda (Ormud), the pure and good god of Persia, to whom Angramainjus, or Ahriman, the evil spirit, is opposed. Eternity created fire and water; out of these arose the spirit of good, Ormud, who is engaged in constant combat with evil Ahriman. Ormud created heaven, the sky, the earth, man, all useful plants and animals; all noxious plants and animals were created by Ahriman. The struggle between the two spirits will continue till the end of the world.

all was finished, he led his Persian wife thither and bestowed on her the artificial mountain from which she could look down on the plain below as from the heights of Rachmed."¹

"Did the Persian woman recover?" asked Nitetis, with downcast eyes.

"She recovered and became happy; and you, too, will in a short time feel happy in our country."

Ladice smiled pleasantly, and said: "I wonder which did more for the recovery of the young queen, the artificial mountain, or the love of the husband who erected such a building for her pleasure."

"The husband's love!" cried the girls.

"But Nitetis will not despise the mountain either," said Bartja. "I shall try to arrange that she may reside on the hanging gardens whenever the court goes to Babylon."

"But now come," cried Amasis, "or you will have to look at the town in the dark. Two scribes have been waiting for me yonder for more than an hour. Hallo, there! Sachons, order the captain of the guards to accompany our guests with a hundred men!"

"But why? Would not a Greek officer, or a guide, suffice?"

"It is better so, youths. A stranger can never be too careful in Egypt. Remember that, and take special care not to laugh at the sacred animals. Farewell, young heroes, we shall meet again to-night over the joyous wine-cup."

The Persians left the palace, led by their interpreter, a Greek who had been brought up in Egypt and spoke both languages equally well.

The streets of Sais which lay in the neighbourhood of the palace were pleasant to look at. The houses, many of them five stories high, were built of light Nile bricks, and were covered with pictures or hieroglyphics; balconies, with railings of carved and painted wood, and supported by painted pillars, surrounded the walls facing the courtyard. The name and rank of the inhabitants were visible

¹ Nebuchadnezzar is said to have constructed the hanging gardens for his Persian wife Amytis.

on the doors of many houses. Flowers and shrubs stood on the flat roofs where the Egyptians liked to spend the evening when they did not prefer to ascend the insect tower, which was to be found on most houses, because the troublesome insects generated by the Nile can only fly low, and hence can be avoided on the little turrets.

The young Persians were delighted with the great, almost excessive cleanness of every house, and even of the streets. The door-plates and knockers glittered in the sun, the paintings on the walls, balconies, and pillars seemed to have been only just completed, and even the pavement in the street looked as if it had been scoured. The further the Persians went from the Nile and the palace, the more insignificant grew the streets. The town was built on the slope of a small hill, and when two hundred and fifty years before the residence of the kings was removed thither, it changed in a comparatively short time from an unimportant place to a large town.

On that side of Sais which was turned towards the Nile, the streets were beautiful and clean, but on the other side of the hill lay the huts of the poor, seldom interrupted by better houses, and made of Nile mud and acacia boughs. The fortified palace of the king stood north-west of the town.

"Let us turn back," cried Gyges, son of Croesus, to his younger companions who were in his charge, and for whom he was responsible during his father's absence, when he saw that the crowd of curious people who followed them increased at every step.

"Be it as you wish," replied the interpreter; "but in the valley at the foot of that hill lies the necropolis of Sais, and I think it is well worth a stranger's while to see it."

"Go on," cried Bartja; "did we not accompany Prexaspes in order to see the wonders of strange countries?"

When they reached an open space, not far from the necropolis, surrounded by the huts of workmen, they heard tumultuous cries break from the crowd which followed them. Children shouted with joy, women screamed, and a voice which drowned all others cried: "Come hither to the court of the temple to see the deeds of the great

magician who comes from the oases of the Libyan deserts, and is endowed with miraculous powers by Chunsu, the giver of good advice, and the great goddess Hekt."

"Follow me to the little temple yonder," said the interpreter; "you will see a strange sight directly."

He forced his way through the crowd of Egyptians, followed by the Persians, pushed back now a naked child, now a yellow-complexioned woman, and soon returned with a priest, who led the strangers to the forecourt of the temple. A man, dressed as a priest, stood there between several chests and boxes; two blacks knelt on the ground beside him.

The Libyan,¹ a gigantic man with supple limbs and piercing black eyes, held a long wooden wind instrument in his hands. Several snakes, known in Egypt as poisonous, wound round his chest and arms. When he stood opposite the Persians, he bowed low, and inviting them with a solemn gesture to attend, removed his white garments, and began to perform various tricks with his snakes. Now he allowed them to bite him, so that the red blood trickled down his cheek; then he forced them by means of strange sounds from his flute to raise themselves and make dancing movements, and, again, he spat into their jaws and changed them to motionless sticks. Then he flung down all the snakes, and danced madly in their midst, without touching one of the creatures with his feet.

The conjuror whirled round and bent his supple limbs like a madman, till his eyes started out of his head, and bloody foam issued from his mouth. Suddenly he threw himself on the ground as though dead. No part of his body moved, and from his lips issued a hissing, whistling sound. At this signal the snakes crept towards him, and wound themselves round his neck, legs, and body like living rings. At last he raised himself, and sang a song about the wonderful power of the deity who, to his own honour, had made him a magician. Hereupon he opened one of the boxes and put in most of the snakes; he kept a few, probably his favourites, as chains and bracelets.

¹ The western shore of the Nile, with the surrounding country, was called Libya. The Libyan Nomos lay in north-west Egypt, and the western region in the neighbourhood of Marmarica was very rich in snakes.

The second part of his performance consisted of conjuring tricks. He swallowed burning flax, balanced swords with their points in the sockets of his eyes while he danced, drew long pieces of string and ribbon from the noses of Egyptian children, played the well-known game of cup-and-ball, and raised the admiration of the spectators to its highest pitch when out of five ostrich eggs he conjured as many living young rabbits.

The Persians were by no means the least appreciative of his audience. On the contrary, this performance, whose like they had never witnessed before, made a deep impression on their minds. They seemed to be in a land of miracles; they thought they had just seen the most wonderful of all Egyptian wonders.

In silence they returned to the better streets, without noticing how many of the Egyptians around them had no hands, or mutilated noses and ears. These disfigured people were nothing unusual to Asiatics, for they too punished many crimes by amputating limbs. If they had inquired, they would have learnt that in Egypt a man deprived of his hand was a convicted forger; a woman without a nose was an adulteress; a man without a tongue a traitor; and that pale, insane woman an infanticide who, as a punishment for her crime, was forced, during three days and three nights, to hold the body of her strangled child in her arms. What woman could keep sane after the expiration of the hours of martyrdom?

Most of the criminal laws of Egypt were framed not only to punish the crime, but also to make the repetition of the first offence impossible.

Now the procession stopped, for a large crowd had assembled in front of one of the finest houses in the street which led to the temple of Neith; its few windows (most windows looked on the court or garden) were closed with shutters. An old man, in the simple white dress of a servant of the temple, stood screaming on the threshold, and trying to prevent several members of his order from removing a large chest from the house.

"Who permits you to rob my master?" he cried, with furious gestures. "I am the guardian of this house, and when my master was sent by the king to Persia—may the

gods destroy it!—he commanded me to take special care of this chest, which contains his manuscripts.”

“Calm yourself, old Hib,” cried the attendant of the temple, whose acquaintance we made at the reception of the Asiatic embassy, “the chief priest of great Neith, your master’s master, sent us hither. There must be strange papers in this chest, or Neithotep would not have honoured us with the commission to bring it to him.”

“But I will not allow the property of my master, the great oculist, Nebenchari, to be stolen,” cried the old man. “I will obtain justice, though I go to the king for it.”

“Stop,” cried the attendant of the temple, “that’s right. Hurry, men, take the chest at once to the chief priest. You will be wise, old man, if you keep a guard over your tongue, and remember that you too are a servant of my master, the chief priest. Hasten back to the house, or to-morrow we shall drag you away as we do the chest to-day.” With these words he flung to the heavy door so violently, that the old man was thrown back into the hall, and thus removed from the eyes of the multitude.

The Persians had looked on at this strange scene, and asked their interpreter for an explanation.

Zopyrus laughed when he heard that the owner of the chest which the all-powerful chief priest had seized, was that oculist who was in Persia to cure the eyes of the king’s mother, and who had made himself disliked at Cambyzes’ court through his grave and sullen demeanour. Bartja wished to ask Amasis what this strange robbery meant, but Gyges begged him not to interfere in matters that did not concern him.

When they arrived in the vicinity of the palace (the darkness, which approaches rapidly in Egypt, was already advancing), Gyges suddenly felt himself detained by a stranger, who held his garment. He looked round, and saw that the stranger signed to him to be silent, by pressing his finger on his lips.

“When can I see you alone and unobserved?” he whispered to Cræsus’ son.

“What do you want of me?”

“Do not ask, but answer quickly. By Mithra, I have important things to reveal.”

"You speak Persian. You are no Egyptian, as your garment would lead me to think."

"I am a Persian—but answer quickly before we are discovered. When can I see you?"

"Early to-morrow."

"That is too late."

"Well, then, in a quarter of an hour, when it is quite dark, at this gate of the palace."

"I shall await you." With these words the man vanished. On their arrival in the palace, Gyges parted from Bartja and Zopyrus, put his sword in his belt, asked Darius to do the same and to follow him, and soon stood before the stranger at the great gate of the palace.

"Auramazda be praised that you have come," he cried in Persian to the young Lydian. "But who is your companion?"

"My friend, an Achæmenide—Darius, son of Hystaspes."

The stranger bowed low, and said: "It is well; I feared an Egyptian had accompanied you."

"No, we are alone, and will hear you, but be brief. Who are you? What do you want?"

"I am called Bubares, and was a poor captain under Cyrus. When we had taken Sardes, your father's town, we were allowed to plunder freely; but your wise father begged Cyrus to stop the pillage, for since he had taken Sardes, it was he, not the former owner, who was being robbed. A command was issued that, on pain of death, everything was to be restored to the captains. They were ordered to collect all the valuables which were brought them, in the market-place. There lay great heaps of gold and silver vessels, piles of ornaments of men and women, encrusted with jewels——"

"Quick, quick, we have not much time," interrupted Gyges.

"You are right, I must be briefer. I forfeited my life because I kept an ointment-box covered with gems out of your father's treasury. Cyrus wished to have me executed, but Cræsus begged my life of his victor. Cyrus set me free, but declared me dishonoured. So I owe my life to your father; but I could not remain in Persia, my disgrace weighed too heavily upon me. A ship brought me from

Smyrna to Cyprus; there I took service, learnt Greek and Egyptian, fought against Amasis, and was finally brought hither by Phanes as prisoner of war. As I had always served in the cavalry, I was put among the slaves who tend the king's horses. I distinguished myself, and after six years became the overseer of the stables. I never forgot your father, and the gratitude I owe him. Now it is my turn to show him a kindness."

"My father is concerned? Speak, speak, tell me."

"Directly. Has Croesus offended prince Psamtik?"

"Not that I know of."

"Your father has gone to Rhodopis, at Naucratis, to-night."

"How do you know?"

"I heard it from him; for I followed him to the boat this morning, to throw myself at his feet."

"Did you succeed?"

"Yes; he granted me a few gracious words, but he could not hear me long, for his companions had already taken their places in the ship when he came. His slave Sandon, whom I know, told me quickly that they were going to Naucratis, and would visit the Greek woman they call Rhodopis."

"He spoke the truth."

"Then there is need of speedy help. When the market was full,¹ ten chariots and two boats bearing Ethiopian warriors, and led by an Egyptian, went secretly to Naucratis, to surround Rhodopis' house, and arrest her guests."

"Treachery!" cried Gyges.

"But what can they wish to do to your father?" asked Darius. "They know that Cambyses' vengeance——"

"I know nothing," returned Bubares, "except that Rhodopis' house, where your father is, is to be surrounded to-night. I myself superintended the preparation of the chariots, and heard the prince's fanbearer say to the captain: "Pentaur, keep your eyes and ears open; let Rhodopis' house be surrounded, so that he does not escape by the back door. Spare his life, if possible; do

¹ The Greeks fixed the time of noon according to the fulness of the market. The market was probably fullest between ten and one.

not kill him unless he resists. If you bring him alive to Sais, you shall receive twenty rings of gold."¹

"Can this really concern my father?"

"Never," cried Darius.

"You cannot tell," murmured Bubares. "Everything is possible in this land."

"How long would a quick horse require to reach Naucratis?"

"Three hours if it can keep up, and the Nile has not risen too high."

"I shall be there in two."

"I will ride with you," cried Darius.

"No, you must remain with Zopyrus and protect Bartja. Bid our servants be prepared."

"But, Gyges——"

"Remain, and make my excuses to Amasis. Say I cannot share the feast because I have a headache, a toothache. Do you understand? I will ride Bartja's Niswan horse. Bubares, follow me on Darius' horse! You will lend it me, my brother?"

"If I had ten thousand horses they would be yours."

"You know the way to Naucratis, Bubares?"

"Perfectly."

"Go, Darius, bid them prepare your horse and Bartja's. Every delay is criminal. Farewell, Darius, perhaps for ever. Protect Bartja. Farewell!"

¹ It is certain that money was not coined in Egypt before the time of the Persians. The precious metals were weighed, and apparently formed into rings, &c. See Ebers, "Egypten in Bild und Wort."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT OF PHANES.

TWO hours before midnight, bright lights shone from the open windows of Rhodopis' house, whence sounded joyous voices.

The tables of the hostess were prepared with special care in honour of Cræsus. The guests of Rhodopis, whom we have already met—Theodorus, Ibycus, Phanes, Aristomachus, the merchant Theopompus of Miletus, Cræsus, and others—wreathed with poplar leaves and roses, reclined on the cushions.

"This land of Egypt," said Theodorus the sculptor, "seems to me like a girl who possesses a golden slipper which she does not like to take off, though it hurts and pinches her, and though beautiful, comfortable slippers stand before her, towards which she need but stretch her hand in order to move freely and unrestrained."

"You mean the rigid hold which Egypt keeps on her ancient forms and customs?" asked Cræsus.

"Certainly," returned the sculptor. "Two centuries back Egypt was indisputably the first country in the world. Her art and science surpassed all that we could do. We learnt much from them, perfected the stiff forms, and gave them freedom and beauty; followed no particular measurement, but took nature for our model, and now we have left our masters far behind us. How was that possible? Principally because the latter were forced by inexorable laws to remain stationary, while we were able to progress to the best of our strength and ability in the wide field of art."

"But how can you force an artist to form his statues according to one uniform model, when they all represent different things?"

"That is easily explained in this case. The Egyptians divide the whole human body into twenty-one and a quarter parts, and from this measurement they find the relative proportions of the separate limbs. They adhere to these figures, and sacrifice to them the higher claims of art. I myself, in the presence of the first Egyptian sculptor, a priest of Thebes, offered Amasis a wager that I would write to my brother Telecles in Ephesus, give him size, proportion, and position according to the Egyptian method, and construct with him a statue which should look as if one hand had wrought it from one block of marble, though Telecles should make the lower part in Ephesus and I would make the upper part in Sais, before the eyes of Amasis."

"Should you win your wager?"

"Certainly. I am ready to begin this work of art; but it will deserve the title 'work of art' as little as an Egyptian statue deserves it."

"But a few statues are excellent; for example, the one which Amasis is sending as a gift to Polycrates of Samos. I even saw a statue at Memphis, about three thousand years old, which is said to represent a king who built one of the great pyramids, and which aroused my admiration in every respect. The unusually hard stone has been manipulated with firmness, the muscles are most neatly wrought, especially those of the legs, feet, and chest; every detail is cleverly treated, the outlines are firmly drawn, the features of the face are in perfect harmony, and all this is visible in other statues."

"Undoubtedly. In spite of the long period of stagnation, the Egyptians are greatly in advance of us in all that regards actual handicraft, the manipulation of even the hardest materials. No Greek statue has ever attained such remarkably beautiful polish as that which we see in Amasis' statue in the court of the palace. The independent treatment of the figure, the work of Prometheus, the endowing the stone with a soul, this will not be learnt by the Egyptians till they have completely renounced their folly with regard to form. You will never be able to represent spiritual life by means of proportions, you cannot even produce the charming variety afforded by the body. Look at those innumerable statues which have been erected

during thousands of years in the palaces and temples from Naucratis to the Cataracts. They all represent kind, earnest, middle-aged men ; and yet one is the statue of an old man, another perpetuates the memory of a royal youth. Heroes, lawgivers, despots, philanthropists, all look much alike, unless they are distinguished by size, by means of which the Egyptian artist expresses strength and power, and the face, which resembles the original like a portrait. Amasis orders a statue as I should order a sword. As soon as we have arranged as to length and breadth, we know in advance what we shall receive when the work is finished. How could I make a broken-down old man as I would make a vigorous youth—a poet like a warrior. Place Ibycus by the side of our friend the Spartan, and think what you would say if I represented the stern warrior and the poet who wins all hearts, in the same manner.”

“And what does Amasis say to your remarks as to this stagnation?”

“He regrets it, but does not feel himself strong enough to abolish these ancient and binding rules of the priests.”

“And yet,” said the Delphian, “he gave a large sum for the adornment of our new temple, in order, I quote his words, ‘to further Greek art.’”

“That was good of him,” cried Croesus. “Will the Alcæonidæ soon have collected the three hundred talents¹ they need for the completion of the temple? If I were still in my old position, I would gladly undertake the whole expense, though your wicked god deceived me shamefully in spite of all the presents I gave him. For when I asked him if I should begin a war against Cyrus, he answered, that I should destroy a great kingdom if I crossed the Halys. I trusted the god, gained the friendship of the Spartans as he commanded, crossed the river, and destroyed a large kingdom, it is true, but that kingdom was not the Medo-Persian, but my own unhappy Lydia, which finds it difficult to become used to the dependent state of one of Cambyses’ provinces.”

“You do wrong to blame the god,” answered Phryxus, “for it was not his fault that your human vanity led you

¹ About £67,500.

to misinterpret his words. He did not say, 'the Persian kingdom,' but 'a kingdom' would be destroyed by your desire for war. Why did you not ask which kingdom he meant? Besides, did he not truly prophesy your son's destiny, and tell you that, on the day of misfortune, he would again recover his speech. And when, after the fall of Sardes, you asked Cyrus to allow you to inquire at Delphi, whether it was the rule of the Greek gods to show ingratitude to their benefactors, Loxias answered that he had had the best intentions regarding you, but that over him, mightier than he, ruled the inexorable fate which foretold to your powerful ancestor that the fifth after him—and that was you—was chosen for misfortune."¹

"Your words," interrupted Cræsus, "would have been more useful in the hour of misfortune than now. There was a time when I cursed your god and his words; but when, with my power and wealth, I lost my flatterers, and became accustomed to use my own judgment with regard to my deeds, I saw plainly that not Apollo, but my vanity had ruined me. A kingdom that was to be destroyed could not be mine—not the mighty realm of mighty Cræsus, the friend of the gods, till then the invincible general. If a friend had pointed out to me this interpretation of the ambiguous words, I should have laughed at him, or perhaps, yes probably, punished him. The despot behaves to the honest friend who touches his wounded soul like the horse that tries to kick the physician, who probes his wound in order to cure it. I did not see what I might easily have seen. Vanity dazzles the eye which was given us to enable us to judge freely of things, and strengthens the desire of the heart which, may the gods be thanked! is open to every hope of gain, and turns away quickly when it feels a well-founded fear of approaching calamity. How much oftener I feel fear now that my eyes are open, and I have nothing to lose, than formerly, when no one had more to lose than I. I am poor compared with what I was, Phryxus; but Cambyzes lets me end my days

¹ This answer was given to Candaules, who murdered King Gyges, and seized the Lydian throne.

as a king, and I can still give you a talent¹ for your building."

Phryxus thanked him ; and Phanes said, "The Alcmaeonidæ will produce a splendid building, for they are ambitious, rich, and desirous of winning the favour of the Amphictyons, in order to overthrow with their help the tyrant, to surpass my race, and to possess themselves of the government."

"You did most to increase the prosperity of this family, I hear, Cræsus," said Ibycus, "not counting Agariste,² who brought Megacles great wealth."

"Certainly, certainly," laughed Cræsus.

"Tell us how it happened," said Rhodopis.

"Alcmaeon of Athens came to my court. I liked the cheerful, refined man, and kept him with me for some time. One day I showed him my treasury, and he was actually driven to despair by my wealth. He called himself a miserable beggar, and pictured what a happy life he could lead if he might plunge his hands but once in these splendours. I allowed him to take as much gold as he could carry. What do you think he did? He put on very high Lydian riding-boots and an apron, and had a basket fastened on his back. He filled it with treasure, heaped up as much gold in the apron as he could carry, filled his boots with gold coins to the top, sprinkled gold-dust on his hair and beard, even filled his mouth with gold, till he looked as if a large radish were choking him. He took a gold dish in each hand, and, bowed down by his burden, dragged himself out of the treasure-chamber. He broke down outside the door. I never laughed so heartily as I did on that day."²

"You let him keep the gold?" asked Rhodopis.

"Certainly, my friend. I thought I had not paid too high a price for the experience that gold can make a fool even of a wise man."

"You were the most generous of princes," cried Phanes.

"And am now a tolerably contented beggar. But tell

¹ According to Böckh, the Attic talent of silver was worth about £225; the mina about £4. 1s. 3d.; the drachma, 9d.; and the obolus, 1½d.

² Agariste was the daughter and heiress of Cleisthenes of Sicyon, and wife of Megacles the Alcmaeonide

me, Phryxus, how much did Amasis contribute to the temple?"

"He gave a thousand talents of alum."

"I call that a regal gift."

"And the prince?"

"When I asked him, and referred to his father's generosity, he laughed bitterly, and, turning his back upon me, said: 'If you like to collect for the destruction of your temples, I am ready to give twice as much as Amasis.'"

"Wretched man!"

"Say, rather, a true Egyptian. Psamtik hates everything that does not belong to this land."

"How much have the Greeks of Naucratis given?"

"Besides the splendid contributions of private individuals, every district¹ has given twenty minæ."

"That is a large sum."

"Philoinus the Sybarite sent me one thousand drachmæ, which were accompanied by a very curious letter. May I read it, Rhodopis?"

"Certainly," returned Rhodopis. "You will see from it that the drunkard repents of his behaviour the other night."

The Delphian took the little scroll from his pocket, and read: "Philoinus sends word to Phryxus: I am sorry I did not drink more the other night at Rhodopis' house, for had I done so I should have been unconscious, and incapable of insulting even the tiniest insect. My accursed moderation is, therefore, to blame that I may no longer enjoy myself at the best furnished table in all Egypt.

"At all events I am grateful to Rhodopis for what I have already enjoyed, and send you, in memory of that magnificent beef for the sake of which I would like to buy the Thracian's cook, twelve spits for roasting oxen.² Let them be put in some treasure-house at Delphi as a present from Rhodopis. I myself, as I am a rich man, will give a thousand drachmæ. This gift is to be publicly announced at the next Pythian games.

¹ Herod., ii. 180. This passage may mean that all the Greeks in Naucratis gave twenty minæ together. As this is too little for such an important town, and too much for each individual, we take for granted that Herodotus referred to the various districts.

² Herod., ii. 15, mentions that Rhodopis sent a similar gift to Delphi.

"Express my gratitude to that rude fellow, Aristomachus of Sparta. He has materially furthered the object of my visit to Egypt. I came hither in order to have a bad tooth extracted by that Egyptian dentist¹ who is said to remove diseased teeth almost painlessly. Aristomachus rid me of this injured part of my jaws with his fist, and saved me from the terrible operation which I dreaded. When I recovered consciousness I found three teeth knocked out—the bad one and two fairly good ones, which I could see would later on, perhaps, have caused me much pain.

"Greet Rhodopis and handsome Phanes from me. I invite you to a banquet at my house in Sybaris this day next year. We are accustomed to send out our invitations early because of various little preparations.

"I am letting my learned slave, Sophotatus, write this letter in the next room, as I get a cramp in my fingers merely from seeing others write."

All the guests laughed loudly, while Rhodopis said: "I am pleased with the letter, because I see from it that Philoinus is not a bad man. Brought up as a Sybarite—"

"Pardon me, gentlemen, if I disturb you, and you, honoured Greek, if I enter your peaceful house uninvited." With these words, a man who was unknown to Rhodopis interrupted the conversation of the guests. "I am Gyges, son of Cræsus, and it is not for any trifling matter that I left Sais two hours ago in order to reach this place in time."

"Menon, a seat for our new guest," cried Rhodopis. "You are heartily welcome in my house. You must rest from your wild, truly Lydian ride."

"By the dog, Gyges," said Cræsus, giving his hand to his son, "I cannot imagine what brings you here so late. I begged you not to leave Bartja, who is entrusted to my care, and yet—. But how strange you look. Has anything happened? Has a misfortune occurred? Speak, speak!"

For a moment Gyges could not answer his father. When

¹ Egyptian dentists must have been very skilful. False teeth have been found in the jaws of mummies.

he saw the man he loved so dearly, for whose life he had trembled, sitting well and cheerful at the rich banquet, he seemed to have lost his speech for the second time. At length he was able to speak, and answered: "The gods be praised, my father, that I see you again, and in safety. Do not think I left my post at Bartja's side without good cause. I was obliged to force my way into this joyous assembly like a bird of evil omen. Know, men, for I must lose no time in preparing you, treachery and danger await you!"

All sprang to their feet as though struck by lightning. Aristomachus silently loosened his sword in its sheath, and Phanes stretched out his arms as though to try whether they still possessed their former strength.

"What is it? What is awaiting us?" was asked on all sides.

"The house is surrounded by Ethiopian warriors," returned Gyges. "A trustworthy man told me that the prince intended to arrest one of you, and had even given orders that his victim should be killed if he resisted. I feared for you, my father, and hastened hither. The man from whom I heard this, has not deceived me. This house is surrounded. When I reached the gate of your garden, Rhodopis, my horse shied in spite of its fatigue. I dismounted, and saw in the moonlight the glittering weapons and flaming eyes of men concealed behind every bush. They allowed us to enter the garden undisturbed."

"An urgent communication," interrupted Cnacias, rushing into the room. "When I went to the Nile to fetch water for the wine-bowl, a man rushed towards me, and nearly knocked me down. I soon recognized him. It was an Ethiopian rower of Phanes, who told me hurriedly that he had sprung from the boat to bathe in the Nile, when a royal barge was laid alongside of Phanes' boat, and a soldier asked the crew whom they served. 'Phanes,' answered the steersman. The royal boat went on without apparently paying any further attention to your vessel; but the bather had seated himself on the rudder of the strange bark in jest, and heard one Ethiopian soldier cry to the other: 'Watch the boat well; now that we know where the bird has his nest, it will be easy to catch him. Remember Psamtik promised us twenty gold rings if we

brought the Athenian to Sais, alive or dead.' This is the report of Sebek, the sailor, who has served you for seven years, O Phanes."

The Athenian had listened to the story of Gyges and the slave with great composure.

Rhodopis trembled. Aristomachus cried: "I will not let them touch a hair of your head, though we should be forced to destroy all Egypt." Cræsus advised prudence; all the guests were greatly agitated.

At last Phanes broke the silence, and said: "Reflection is never so necessary as in time of danger. After due consideration, I see that it is scarcely possible for me to escape. The Egyptians will try to kill me without attracting attention. They know that early to-morrow I mean to leave Naucratis for Sigeum in a Phocian trireme, and that they have no time to lose if they wish to catch me. Your whole garden is surrounded, Rhodopis. If I remain here, you may be certain they will not respect your house as an asylum, but will search it, and take me prisoner here. There is no doubt that the Phocian ship which was to take me to my relations is watched, as well as this house. No blood shall be shed for me unnecessarily."

"You must not give yourself up!" cried Aristomachus.

"I have it," suddenly cried Theopompus, the Milesian merchant. "A ship, which I have loaded with Egyptian corn, sails to-morrow at sunrise, not from Naucratis but from Canopus, to Miletus. Take the noble Persian's horse and ride thither. We will force a way for you through the gardens."

"Our unarmed party would not suffice to carry out such a bold stroke," returned Gyges. "There are ten of us, of whom only three possess swords; they number at least a hundred, and are armed to the teeth."

"If you, Lydian, were ten times deficient in courage, and if they were two hundred," cried Aristomachus, "I should fight."

Phanes pressed his friend's hand. Gyges turned pale. The tried hero had called him a coward! Again words failed him to defend himself. Every mental excitement seemed to paralyse his tongue. Suddenly he coloured, and cried quickly and decidedly: "Follow me, Athenian."

Spartan, you usually weigh your words before you speak. Henceforth call no one a coward whom you do not know. Friends, Phanes is saved. Farewell, my father."

The remaining guests looked after the men with amazement. Soon after they had disappeared, the listeners heard two horses gallop away, and then, after a longer pause, they distinguished a prolonged whistle and cries for help from the Nile.

"Where is Cnacias?" asked Rhodopis of one of her slaves.

"He went into the garden with Phanes and the Persian." At that moment the old servant entered the room trembling and pale.

"Have you seen my son?" Croesus cried. "Where is Phanes?"

"Both send you their farewell greetings through me."

"Then they have left? How did they escape? Whither have they gone?"

"At first the Persian and Athenian had a short discussion in the next room. Then I had to unrobe them. Phanes put on the trousers, coat, and belt of the Persian, and placed his pointed cap on his curls; the Persian wrapped himself in the chiton and cloak of the Athenian, put his gold circlet on his brow, let the hair be cut from his upper lip, and bade me follow him to the garden.

"Phanes, whom every one would have taken for a Persian in his new dress, sprang on the back of a horse that waited by the gate. The stranger kept shouting to him: 'Farewell, Gyges, farewell dear Persian; a pleasant journey, Gyges.' The servant who was waiting at the door, followed him. I heard the clash of weapons in all the bushes, but no one stopped the fugitive Athenian. The hidden warriors evidently thought him a Persian.

"When we again stood before the house, the stranger said to me: 'Now take me to Phanes' boat and continue to call me by the Athenian's name.' 'But the sailors might easily betray you,' I objected. 'Then go to them alone, and bid them receive me as though I were their master, Phanes.'

"I begged him to allow me to be captured in the fugitive's dress in his place. He refused decidedly, and he

was in the right when he said my carriage might easily betray me. Alas! only the freeman walks straight and upright. The slave's neck is always bent, his movements want the grace which you nobles acquire in schools and gymnasiums. So it will always be, for our children must resemble their fathers. No rose comes from the common onion, no hyacinth from the grey radish. Service bows the neck, while the consciousness of freedom causes men to walk erect."

"What became of my son?" interrupted Croesus.

"He would not accept my poor sacrifice. He bade me greet you a thousand times, O king, and entered the boat. I called after him: 'Farewell Phanes; a pleasant journey, Phanes.' A cloud hid the moon. It had become very dark. Suddenly I heard screams and cries for help, and at last I heard the even stroke of the oars. I was about to return to the house and tell you what had happened, when Sebek the sailor again swam ashore. He reported as follows: 'The Egyptians had pierced Phanes' boat, probably by means of divers, and as soon as they had reached the middle of the stream she sank. The sailors called for help. The royal boat, which had followed them, took the pretended Phanes on board, as though to save him, and prevented the rest of the Athenian's sailors from leaving their benches. They all sank with their boat, only Sebek, the bold swimmer, reached the shore. Gyges is in the royal barge. Phanes has escaped. The whistle must have been meant for the soldiers at the back gate. When I examined the bushes by the roadside, before I entered, I found no one hidden there, but I heard the clashing of weapons and voices of warriors on the road to Sais.'"

The guests of Rhodopis had listened to the slave's story with feverish excitement. When he had finished, they experienced very mixed sensations. The first feeling of the majority was joy at the escape of a loved friend from a threatened danger, but then came a fear for the brave Lydian. His generosity was praised, the father of such a son was congratulated, and finally they agreed that as soon as the prince discovered his mistake, he would not only be obliged to release Gyges at once, but he would be bound to give him satisfaction.

Croesus consoled himself with the thought of Amasis' friendship, and his evident dread of the Persian power. Soon after this he left Rhodopis' house to spend the night with the Milesian Theopompus.

"Greet Gyges from me," cried Aristomachus, when the old man took his leave. "I beg his pardon, and send him word that I should like to have him for my friend, but if that may not be, I should like to meet him as an honoured foe on the battlefield."

"Who knows what the future may bring," returned Croesus, giving the Spartan his hand.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST LOVE.

A NEW day had dawned on Egypt. The heavy dew, which takes the place of rain on the Nile, lay like emeralds and diamonds on the leaves and blossoms. The sun was still low down in the east, and the morning air, cooled by a fresh north-west wind, invited one into the open air before the oppressive heat of midday.

Two female figures, the old slave Melitta and Sappho, Rhodopis' grandchild, came out of the house.

The lovely girl ran and walked through the garden with light step. She was as lovely and maidenly as in her sleep. A mischievous expression played round her rosy mouth and the dimples in chin and cheek. Her thick brown hair peeped from under the red handkerchief on her head, and her light, white morning dress with wide sleeves, fell loosely about her active figure.

Now she stooped, picked a young rosebud, and sprinkled the dew which lay on it in her old nurse's face, laughed loudly at her piece of mischief, fastened the rose in her bosom, and began to sing in a remarkably full and pleasant voice.

Cupid once upon a bed
Of roses laid his weary head;
Luckless urchin, not to see
Within the leaves a slumbering bee.

The bee awaked with anger wild,
The bee awaked, and stung the child.
Loud and piteous are his cries;
To Venus quick he runs, he flies!

"O mother! I am wounded through,
I die with pain, in sooth I do!
Stung by some angry little thing,
Some serpent on a tiny wing.
A bee it was, for once I know
I heard a rustic call it so."¹

"Is not my song pretty?" said the laughing girl. "How silly little Eros is to mistake a bee for a winged snake. Grandmother says she knows another verse of this song which was composed by the great poet Anacreon, but she will not teach it to me yet. Tell me, Melitta, what do you think the verse is about. You smile. My dear, dear Melitta, sing the little verse to me. Or do you not know it? No? Well then, of course you cannot teach it to me."

"It is quite a new song," returned the old woman, resisting her darling's importunities; "and I only know the songs of the good old times. But what is that? Did you not hear a knock at the gate?"

"Yes, and I thought I heard a horse's hoof on the road. There is another knock—see who it is seeks admission so early. Perhaps it is our good Phanes, who did not leave yesterday after all, and has come to bid us farewell again."

"Phanes has gone," returned the old woman, growing more serious. "Rhodopis bade me send you to the house if visitors came. Go, girl, that I may open the gate. There is another knock!" Sappho pretended to run to the house, but instead of obeying her nurse, she hid behind a rose-bush, to see who the early visitor was. The events of the preceding evening had been kept secret from her in order to prevent her feeling anxious, and Sappho was accustomed to see none but the most intimate friends of her grandmother at that early hour.

¹ From the "Odes of Anacreon," translated by Thomas Moore. The last verse, which contains the point of the poem, runs as follows:—

Thus he spake, and she the while
Heard him with a soothing smile;
Then said; "My infant, if so much
Thou feel the little wild bee's touch,
How must the heart, ah Cupid! be,
The hapless heart that's stung by thee?"

Melitta opened the gate of the garden, and soon after admitted a fair-haired, richly-dressed youth.

Sappho, surprised at the strange dress and great beauty of the Persian prince—for he it was who visited them thus early—did not move, and could not turn her eyes from his face. It was thus that she had always pictured to herself bright-haired Apollo, the charioteer of the sun, and the leader of the muses.

Melitta and the stranger approached her hiding-place, and she pushed forward her little head between the roses so that she might better understand the youth who was speaking pleasantly to the slave in broken Greek.

Now she heard him ask, with some eagerness, after Cræsus and his son. Then, for the first time, she heard from the old woman all that had happened the evening before. She trembled for Phanes; she thanked noble Gyges in her heart; she wondered who this regally-dressed youth could be. She had, it is true, heard from Rhodopis of the heroic deeds of Cyrus, of the fall of Cræsus, and the power and wealth of the Persians; but till now she had always thought the Asiatics a wild, uncivilized people. The longer she looked at Bartja, the greater grew her interest in the Persians. When at last Melitta left him to waken her grandmother, and announce the early visitor, she wished to follow her, but Eros, the foolish boy at whose childish ignorance the girl had scoffed a short time ago, willed it otherwise. Her dress caught in the thorns of the rose-tree, and before she could get free, the handsome Persian stood before her, and helped the deeply-blushing girl to disentangle it from the treacherous bush. Sappho could not utter a word of thanks, but looked down, smiling shyly.

The silence only lasted a short time, for the girl, who had soon recovered from her fright, suddenly broke out into a bright, joyous laugh in childish amusement at the silent stranger, and the peculiarity of their position, and fled towards the house like a startled deer.

The Persian's usual self-possession returned to him; with two strides he overtook the girl. Quick as lightning he seized her hand, and held it in spite of her struggles.

"Let me go," begged Sappho, raising her dark eyes half in jest, half in earnest.

"How can I?" he returned. "I plucked you from the rose-bush, and must keep hold of you till you give me in your stead your sister upon your bosom as a keepsake in my distant home."

"Please let me go," repeated Sappho. "I cannot bargain with you till you let go my hand."

"But you will not run away if I grant your request?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, then, I will give you your freedom, but now you must give me your rose."

"There are far lovelier ones on the bush yonder. Pick one of those. Why do you want to have just this one?"

"In order to keep it carefully, in memory of the loveliest maiden I have ever seen."

"Now I shall not give you the rose at all, for whoever says I am beautiful wishes me ill, but whoever says I am good wishes me well."

"Who told you that?"

"My grandmother, Rhodopis."

"Well, then, I will tell you you are the best girl in the world."

"How can you say such things, when you do not know me at all? Sometimes I am very naughty and disobedient. If I were good, I should go back to the house, as I ought to, instead of chattering to you. Grandmother has strictly forbidden me to stay in the garden when strangers are there; and I really do not care at all about all those men who always talk of things I cannot understand."

"Then I suppose you would like me to go away?"

"O, no, for I understand you very well, though you do not talk as beautifully as Ibycus, for example, or poor Phanes, who, as I only just heard from Melitta, was forced to fly so hastily."

"Did you love him?"

"Love! O yes, I liked him very much. When I was a little girl, he always brought me balls, dolls, and ninepins from Sais and Memphis, when I grew up, he taught me pretty new songs, and for a farewell gift, he brought me a tiny little Sicilian lapdog, which I shall call Argos, because it is so swift-footed and white;¹ but in a few days we shall

¹ This was the name of Odysseus' dog.

receive quite another present from our good Phanes for—there, you see what I am. I nearly told you a great secret. Grandmother strictly forbade me to tell anyone what dear little guests we are expecting; but it seems to me as if we had known each other for a long while, and your eyes are so good that I should like to tell you everything. You see, besides grandmother and old Melitta, I have no one in the world to whom I can tell what pleases me, and, I don't know why it is, sometimes they cannot understand why some beautiful thing or other should give me so much pleasure, though they love me so dearly."

"That is because they are old, and can no longer understand the gladness of a young heart. Have you no companions of your own age, whom you love?"

"Not one. There are certainly many other girls in Naucratis, but grandmother says I must not seek to be intimate with them, and because they would not come to us, I was not allowed to go to them."

"Poor child! if you were in Persia, I would soon find you a friend. I have a sister, called Atossa, who is as young, beautiful and good as you are."

"What a pity she did not come with you. But now you must tell me what I am to call you?"

"I am called Bartja."

"Bartja, what a strange word! Bartja, Bartja. Do you know, I like the name very much. What is the name of that brave son of Croesus, who so nobly saved our Phanes?"

"He is called Gyges. Darius, Zopyrus and he are my best friends. We swore to each other never to part, and to sacrifice our life-blood for each other. Therefore I hastened hither secretly, early this morning, in spite of their eager entreaties, to help my Gyges in case he needed help."

"But you have ridden in vain?"

"No, by Mithra, that is not so, for I found you in my ride. But now you must tell me, what I am to call you."

"My name is Sappho."

"A beautiful name. Are you related to the poet who wrote those fine songs Gyges sings to me?"

"Certainly; the tenth muse or the Lesbian swan, as they

call the older Sappho, was the sister of my grandfather Charaxus. I suppose your friend Gyges knows Greek better than you do?"

"As a child he learnt Greek as well as Lydian, and he speaks both languages equally well. He also knows Persian perfectly, and, what is better still, he has acquired all the virtues of the Persians."

"What do you consider the greatest virtues?"

"Truthfulness is the first of all, the second is courage, the third is obedience. These three, joined to reverence for the gods, have made us Persians great."

"But I thought you had no gods?"

"Foolish child! who could exist without gods, who would wish to exist without a guide? It is true we do not believe that our gods live in houses and pictures as you do. All things created form their dwelling. The deity who must be everywhere, and must see and hear everything, cannot be shut up behind walls."

"But if you have no temples where do you pray and sacrifice?"

"On the greatest of altars; in the midst of nature, or best of all, on the summits of the mountains. There we are nearest to our Mithra, the great sun, and Auramazda, the pure, creating light. There darkness comes last, there light dawns first. Only light is pure and good, darkness is black and evil. Yes, girl, the deity is nearest to us on the mountains, there he likes to dwell. Have you never stood on the wooded summit of a lofty mountain and felt the soft, mysterious breath of the deity in the solemn silence of nature? Have you never thrown yourself down in the green wood, by pure springs, under the wide vault of heaven and listened to the voice of the god, who spoke from the heavens and the waters? Have you never seen how the flame rises up irresistibly to its father, the sun, and in the smoke that ascends to heaven bears your prayer to the great, shining creator? You listen to me with surprise, but I assure you, you would kneel down with me and pray if I could lead you to an altar on the summit of the mountains."

"O that I could go with you, that one day I could look down from a mountain on all the villages and rivers, woods,

and fields! I think that up there, where nothing can hide from my glance, I should feel as if I myself were the all-seeing deity. But what was that? Grandmother calls. I must go."

"Do not leave me, maiden."

"Obedience is also a Persian virtue."

"And my rose?"

"Here it is."

"Will you remember me?"

"Can I do otherwise?"

"Dear maid, forgive me if I ask another favour of you."

"Quick, quick. Grandmother is calling again."

"Take this diamond star in memory of this hour."

"I cannot."

"Please take it. My father gave it me as a reward the first time I killed a bear. It was till now my dearest treasure, but you shall have it, for now I know nothing dearer than you."

The youth took the chain and star from his breast, and tried to put it round the girl's neck. Sappho refused to accept the costly gift, but Bartja put his arm round her, kissed her forehead, called her "his only love," put the jewel round her neck with kind force and looked deep into the dark eyes of the trembling child.

Rhodopis called for the third time. Sappho freed herself from the prince's arms, and was about to fly, but she turned again at the prince's entreaty, and answered his question: "When may I see you again?" with the whispered words: "Early to-morrow, by that rosebush."

"Which was my ally, and kept hold of you."

Sappho hurried to the house. Rhodopis received Bartja, and told him what she knew of his friend's fate.

The young Persian at once rode back to Sais.

When that evening Rhodopis came as usual to her granddaughter's bedside, she did not find her sleeping like a child, for her lips moved, and she sighed deeply and sadly, as though troubled by dreams.

Bartja, on his way from Naucratis to Sais, met his friends Darius and Zopyrus, who had followed him as soon as they discovered his secret departure. They had no idea that he had found the happiness of first-love, instead of

the dangers he expected. Croesus reached Sais a short time before the three friends. He at once went to the king, and told him truthfully and without reserve all that had taken place the previous evening.

Amasis expressed surprise at his son's behaviour, assured his friend that Gyges should at once be set at liberty, and gave vent to mocking words and jests at the failure of Psamtik's revenge.

Croesus had scarcely left him when the prince was announced.

CHAPTER X.

PSAMTIK'S THREAT.

A MASIS received his son with loud laughter, and cried, without noticing his pale, disturbed face: "Did I not tell you that it was no easy thing for a simple Egyptian to catch the subtlest of all Greek foxes? I would have given ten towns of my kingdom if I could have been present when the sweet-tongued Athenian turned out to be the stammering Lydian."

Psamtik became still paler. He trembled with rage, and returned, in a suppressed voice: "It is not well, my father, that you rejoice at the insult offered to your son. Were it not for Cambyzes' sake, by the eternal gods, the insolent Lydian would this day have seen the light of the sun for the last time. But what is it to you if I, your son, become a butt for the contempt of these Greek beggars!"

"Do not abuse those who have shown that they were cleverer than you."

"Cleverer, cleverer! My plan was so ingeniously and subtly arranged that——"

"The most delicate webs are easiest torn."

"That the Greek intriguer could not have escaped me if, contrary to all precedent, the ambassador of a foreign power had not made himself the preserver of a man condemned to death by us."

"You are mistaken, my son. It is not the execution of a judicial sentence, but the success or failure of a personal vengeance that is at stake."

"The instruments of this vengeance were the king's officials, and therefore the least I can desire of you is that you ask the King of Persia to punish the man who, unasked, interfered with the execution of your command. Such a

crime will be appreciated at its true value in Persia, where all bow before the will of the king as before a deity. Cambyzes owes it to us to punish Gyges."

"I shall certainly not ask this, for I confess I rejoice at Phanes' safety. Gyges has saved me from the reproach of shedding innocent blood, and has prevented you from taking cruel revenge on a man to whom your father is indebted."

"Then you will conceal the whole incident from Cambyzes?"

"No, I will tell it him, jestingly, in a letter, as is my way; and at the same time I will warn him as to Phanes. I will prepare him lest the Athenian, after escaping with difficulty from our vengeance, strive to stir up the might of the Persians against Egypt. And I will entreat my son-in-law to turn a deaf ear to the slanderer. The friendship of Cræsus and Gyges concerns us more than the hate of Phanes."

"Is that your last word? You will not grant me satisfaction?"

"No; it shall be as I said."

"Then do not fear Phanes alone, but also another man, who is in our power, and who has you in his power."

"You intend to threaten me, and break the bond which united us but yesterday. Psantik, Psantik, I advise you to consider that you stand before your king and father."

"Do you remember that I am your son; for if you again force me to forget that the gods made you my father, and I find that I can expect no help from you, then I shall know how to fight with my own weapons."

"I feel curious to hear what they are."

"I need not conceal them from you. You must know that I and my friends, the priests, have the oculist, Nebenchari, in our power."

Amasis turned pale.

"Before you could guess that Cambyzes would woo your daughter, you sent this man to distant Persia, in order to remove from Egypt one who was privy to the descent of my reputed sister, Nitetis. He lives there, and, at the slightest sign from the priests, he will tell the deceived

king that, in place of your daughter, you dared send him the daughter of your dethroned predecessor, Hophra. All the papers of the physician are in our possession. The most important is a letter in your own handwriting, promising one thousand gold rings to his father, if he would conceal from the priests that Nitetis was descended from another house than yours."

"Who has these papers?"

"The priests."

"They speak through your mouth?"

"You have said it."

"Repeat what you desire."

"Ask Cambyeses to punish Gyges, and give me full power to persecute the fugitive Phanes as I think good."

"Is that all?"

"Swear to the priests that henceforth you will refuse to allow the Greeks to raise new temples to their false gods in Egypt, and that you will stop the building of the temple of Apollo at Memphis."

"I expected similar demands. You have found a sharp weapon against me. I am prepared to accede to the wishes of my foes, whom you have joined; but I also must make two conditions. Firstly, I must have back the letter which I was imprudent enough to write to Nebenchari's father. If I left it in your hands, instead of remaining your king I should become the miserable slave of wretched priestly plots."

"Your wish is just. You shall receive the letter if——"

"No second 'if.' You must know that I think your other wish—that Cambyeses should be asked to punish Gyges—so foolish that I shall not grant it. Now leave me, and do not come again till I send for you. Yesterday I gained a son, only to lose him again to-day. Rise; I desire no signs of a humility and love you never knew. If you need consolation or advice, turn to the priests, and see if they will take the place of your father. Tell Neithotep, in whose hands you are soft wax, that he has found the right way to force concessions from me, which I should otherwise have denied him. In order to keep Egypt great, I have till now been willing to make every personal sacrifice; but since

I see that the priests do not fear to accuse me of betraying my country, in order to gain their own ends, I may easily be brought to look on this privileged caste as more dangerous enemies to my realm than even the Persians. Beware, beware! This time I yield to my enemies' cunning, for my paternal weakness has conjured up a danger over Egypt. But in future, I swear by great Neith, my mistress, I will prove that I am king, and that I would rather sacrifice the whole priesthood than the smallest portion of my will. Be silent! Leave me!"

The prince went away. This time a longer period elapsed before the king could go to his guests, outwardly gay.

Psamtik went at once to the commander of the native troops, and ordered him to banish the Egyptian captain—the unskilful instrument of his baffled vengeance—to the stone quarries of the Thebais, and to send the Ethiopian warriors home. Then he went to the chief priest of Neith, to tell him what concessions he had forced from the king.

Neithotep shook his head doubtfully on hearing Amasis' threat, and sent away the prince, after bestowing on him the exhortations without which he never dismissed him.

Psamtik went home. The failure of his revenge, the fatal quarrel with his father, his fear of the stranger's scorn, the feeling of dependence on the will of the priests, the belief in a dread fate which had threatened him since birth—all this weighed on his heart and clouded his mind.

A beautiful wife and five blooming children had been his, but nothing was left him but a daughter and a little boy, whom he loved deeply. He now felt drawn to him, and hoped to find consolation and new courage in his presence. The blue eyes and laughing mouth of his son were the only things that could warm his cold heart.

"Where is my son?" he asked the first courtier whom he met.

"The king has just sent for Prince Necho and his nurse," returned the servant.

The steward of the prince approached, and, bowing low,

handed him a sealed letter written on papyrus, and said: "From your father, the king."

Psamtik in angry haste broke the yellow seal¹ which bore the name of the king, and read: "I have sent for your son, so that he may not, like you, grow up the blind tool of the priests, and forget what he owes to himself and his country. I will attend to his education, for the impressions of childhood influence the whole future life. If you wish to see Necho, I have no objection; but you must first send me word."

The prince bit his lips till they bled, in order to hide his anger from the servants round him. According to Egyptian custom, the wish of his father and king was as binding as the strictest command. For a few minutes he reflected in silence; then he called for hunters, dogs, bows, and lances, sprang into a light chariot, and was driven by the charioteer into the marshlands in the west, to forget his troubles in the pursuit of the inhabitants of the wilderness, and to vent his anger on animals instead of on his escaped foes.

Gyges was set at liberty directly after his father's interview with Amasis, and was received with shouts of joy by his companions. Pharaoh seemed anxious to compensate his friend's son for his imprisonment by increased kindness; for on the same day he gave him a splendid chariot drawn by two noble brown horses, and begged him to take to Persia a skilfully carved game of draughts, in memory of Sais. The men were of ivory and ebony, inlaid in gold and silver with sententious sayings in hieroglyphics.

Amasis and his guests laughed heartily at Gyges' stratagem. The young heroes were allowed to associate freely with the king's family, and Amasis treated them as a cheerful father treats his lively sons. But at meal-time his Egyptian nature asserted itself. The Persians had to eat at a separate table. He would, according to the belief of his ancestors, have been polluted if he had taken his meals at the same table as the strangers.

When, three days after Gyges' liberation, Amasis de-

¹ The Egyptians wore seal rings at a very early date. In Genesis xli. 42, we are told that Pharaoh gave his ring to Joseph. Rings have been found on the hands of mummies.

clared that in two weeks his daughter Nitetis would be ready to leave for Asia, the Persians grieved that they were to stay in Egypt no longer.

Croesus liked to associate with the Samian poets and sculptors. Gyges shared his father's love for the Greek artists. One evening, Darius, who already in Babylon had occupied himself with astrology, was looking at the stars, when, strange to say, he was addressed by the grey-haired chief priest of Neith, who invited him to follow him to the highest pylon, the chief observatory of the temple. The eager youth did not wait for a second invitation, and every night he listened to the old man's teaching and acquired new knowledge.

Psamtik once met the stranger with his master, and, when Darius had gone, asked Neithotep how it was that he initiated the stranger into Egyptian secrets.

"I teach him," returned the chief priest, "things which every learned Chaldæan in Babylon knows as well as we do; and thus I gain the friendship of a man whose stars outline those of Cambyzes as the sun does the moon. I tell you, one day Darius will become a mighty ruler. I have seen his stars shine over Egypt. A wise man must not live in the present only, he must also look towards the future, and study not only his path, but also its surroundings. When you pass a house, you cannot tell whether your future benefactor is not being educated there. Leave nothing unnoticed that stands in your path; but, above all, look up at the heavens. As the sleepless dog watches for thieves at night, so have I watched for fifty years the wanderers of heaven, the everlasting prophets of fate, that burn in the æther, and determine for man in advance, morning and evening, summer and winter, sorrow and joy, fame and dishonour. They are infallible, and they have shown me that Darius is a plant which will develop into a lofty tree."

These midnight studies of his friend were very agreeable to Bartja, for Darius slept longer than usual in consequence of them, and the prince had less difficulty in undertaking his secret journeys to Naucratis, whither he was accompanied by Zopyrus, whom he had made his confidant.

While he was engaged with Sappho, his friend and the servants tried to catch a few jerboas, snipes, pelicans, or jackals. On their return they would assure their mentor, Cræsus, that during their expedition they had occupied the time with the chase, the favourite pastime of Persian nobles.

No one noticed the change that first love had wrought in the inmost soul of the prince, save Tachot, daughter of Amasis. Since the first day that Bartja spoke to her, she had felt a passionate love for the handsome youth. With all the sensitiveness of love, she felt at once that something had come between them. At first Bartja had treated her like a brother, and sought her presence; now he carefully avoided approaching her familiarly. He guessed her secret, and thought it would be a crime against his love to Sappho even to look at her with kindness.

The poor princess grieved at the youth's coldness, and made a confidant of Nitetis, who encouraged her, and they built castles in the air together. Both girls imagined how splendid it would be if they married the two royal brothers, so that they need not part, and could live at one court. Day after day passed, and the handsome prince visited the girls more and more rarely, and when he came, he treated Tachot with cold formality.

In spite of this, the poor girl was obliged to confess that Bartja, during his stay in Egypt, had become handsomer and more manly. A proud and yet gentle consciousness of his own power shone in his large eyes; and, instead of his former youthful boldness, a peculiar dreamy calm penetrated his whole being. His rosy cheeks had lost their colour, but that became him well—better than the girl, who, like him, grew paler every day.

Melitta, Rhodopis' old slave, had become the protector of the lovers. She had surprised Bartja and Sappho one morning, and received such rich bribes from the prince, and was so entirely won by his beauty, and so eagerly entreated and sweetly flattered by her darling, that she promised not to tell her mistress, and at last yielded to the impulse of old women to favour young lovers, and

helped them to meet in every possible way. She already saw "her sweet little daughter" ruler of half the world. She called her "queen" and "princess" when they were alone; and in moments of weakness she fancied herself a richly dressed dignitary of the Persian court.

CHAPTER XL

A LOVE SCENE.

THREE days before the time appointed for Nitetis' departure, Rhodopis had invited a large number of guests to Naucratis, among them Croesus and Gyges.

During the feast the two lovers, protected by night and the old slave, were to meet in the garden. When Melitta had satisfied herself that all were engaged in conversation she opened the gate, admitted the prince into the garden, and led him to his love. Then she went away, to warn them of any listener by clapping her hands.

"I shall have you near me only three days longer," whispered Sappho. "Do you know, sometimes it seems to me as if I had seen you yesterday for the first time; but generally I think you have belonged to me for ages, and that I have loved you as long as I have lived."

"I also think that you have been mine all my life, for I cannot imagine that I once existed without you. How I would that our separation were over."

"Believe me, it will pass far quicker than you think. It will seem very, very long while we wait; but when we are together again, I think it will seem as if we had but just bidden each other farewell. You see it has been so with me every day. How I have longed for the morning for your sake; but when it came, and you sat by my side, I thought I had never parted from you, and your hand lay on my head since yesterday."

"And yet a fear I never knew before comes over me when I think of the hour of parting."

"I do not fear it much. Certainly, my heart will bleed when you bid me farewell; but I know you will re-

turn soon, and will not forget me. Melitta wanted to ask the oracle if you would remain true to me. She also wanted to go to an old woman who has just come from Phrygia, and can prophesy at night by means of ropes. For the sake of purification she wants incense, styrax, moon-shaped cakes, and leaves from wild thornbushes. But I forbade it, for my heart knows better than Pythia, ropes, and sacrificial smoke that you will remain true to me, and always love me."

"Your trust does not deceive you."

"But I was not quite free from anxiety, for, after the fashion of girls, I blew a hundred times at least on a poppy leaf, and struck it. When it popped, I rejoiced, and said: 'He will not forget you;' when it tore without a sound, I was sad. But then it nearly always gave the longed-for sound, and I could be happy more often than sad."

"And so it shall always be."

"Yes, so it must always be. But speak more softly, my beloved, lest Cnacias, who is going to the Nile to fetch water, notice us."

"Yes, I will speak more softly—so! Now I will push back your silken hair, and whisper in your ear: 'I love you, dear!' You understand me?"

"My grandmother says it is easy to understand what you wish to hear; but had you whispered in my ear just now: 'I hate you,' yet would your look have told me that you love me. The eye's dumb mouth is far more eloquent than all the voices in the whole wide world."

"I would I could speak, like you, the lovely language of the Greeks!"

"Oh, I am glad you cannot speak it better, for if you could tell me all you feel, I think you would look into my eyes less tenderly. What are words? Do you hear the nightingale yonder? The gift of speech has not fallen to her lot, and yet I understand her well."

"Confide it to me. I would like to know what Bulbul, as we call the nightingale, is saying to her lover in the roses. May you betray to me what the bird says?"

"I'll tell it in a whisper. Philomele sings to her hus-

band: 'I love you;' and his answer is, listen: 'Itys, ito, itys.'"¹

"And what does 'Ito, ito,' mean?"

"I accept it, I accept it."

"And 'itys'?"

"That needs an ingenious explanation. 'Itys' is a circle. The circle means, so I was taught, eternity, for it has no beginning and no end. Therefore the nightingale cries: 'I accept it, I accept it, for all eternity.'"

"And if I tell you now I love you?"

"Then I, like the singer of the night, will answer, rejoicing: 'I accept it for to-day, for to-morrow, for eternity!'"

"Oh, what a night! In silence all things rest. I do not even hear the nightingale. Yonder, on the acacia tree, whose clusters of flowers give forth such sweet scent, she lingers. The tops of the palms are reflected in the Nile. The image of the moon, like a white swan, shines between them."

"And its rays enchant with silver threads everything that lives. Therefore the whole world lies in utter silence, motionless, and like an imprisoned woman. Now, happy as I am, I could not laugh or speak with a loud voice."

"Then whisper or sing."

"You are right. Give me my lute. Thank you. Now let me rest my head against your breast, and sing to you a quiet, peaceful song. Alcmann the Lydian, who resides at Sparta, composed this song in praise of night. Now listen, for this song must be whispered softly, softly. Kiss me no more till I have finished; but then I shall demand a kiss in gratitude.

'Sleep reigns o'er all the mountain-tops and forces,²
And crags and watercourses,
And leaves and creeping things,
Whate'er the rich earth brings.
And mountain beasts withal and swarming bees,
And the great monsters of the deep, dark seas,

¹ This is Æschylus' interpretation of the song of the nightingale. The ingenious explanation of *ἵτυς*, *ἵτω*, is a jest which we may surely let childish Sappho utter.

² Translated by G. Scott, Esq., Merton College.

And feathered fowl all wrapped in slumber deep,
Must own the power of sleep.'

Now, darling, my kiss."

"I forgot the kiss in listening, as before kissing made me forget to listen."

"You bad boy! Is my song not beautiful?"

"Beautiful as all you sing."

"And as all that the great Greek poets write."

"Herein I agree with you also."

"Have you no singers in Persia?"

"How can you ask! Could a nation boast of noble feelings if it despised song!"

"But you have very bad customs."

"Well!"

"You marry many wives."

"My Sappho——"

"Do not misunderstand me. You see I love you so well that I wish for nothing save your happiness, and that I may be able to share your whole existence. If in marrying me alone you violate a custom of your home; if you should be despised, or only blamed, because of your fidelity—for who could despise my Bartja—then take other wives beside me. But first let me possess you quite alone for two or three years. Will you do that, Bartja?"

"I will."

"And then, when my time is over, and you must give way to the custom of your land—for you will wed no other wife for love—then let me be your first slave. I have pictured it all to myself. When you go to war, I shall put the tiara on your head, gird on your sword, and give you your lance. When you return as victor, I shall be the first to crown you. When you ride to the chase, I will put on your spurs; and when you go to the banquet, I will adorn and anoint you, make poplar and rose wreaths, and wind them round your brow and shoulders. If you are wounded, I will nurse you; if you are sick, I will not leave your side; if you are happy, I will withdraw, and rejoice from afar in your fame and prosperity. Perhaps then you will call me to you, and your kiss will say you are content with your Sappho."

"Oh, Sappho, would you were my wife to-day. He who

possesses a great treasure, as I do in you, will guard it, but not strive after other treasures which must seem poor in comparison. He who has loved you will never love another. It is certainly a custom in my home that a man has several wives; but it is merely allowed, it is by no means a law. My father had, it is true, a hundred slaves, but only one real, true wife, our mother, Cassandane."

"Shall I be your Cassandane?"

"No, my Sappho. What you will be to me no wife has ever yet been to her husband."

"When will you come and fetch me?"

"As soon as I can and may."

"Well, I will wait patiently."

"How shall I receive news of you?"

"I will write you long letters, and send you messages by all the winds."

"Do so, my darling. And as for the letters, give them to the messenger who from time to time will bring news to Nitetis from Egypt."

"How shall I find him?"

"I will leave a man in Naucratis who will send all you give him to its destination. I will arrange the rest with Melitta."

"We may trust her, for she is clever and faithful. But I have another friend, who loves me best after you, and whom I love best after you."

"You mean your grandmother, Rhodopis?"

"My faithful guardian and teacher."

"She is a noble woman. My father, Croesus, thinks her the most excellent of women; and he knows mankind as well as a physician knows herbs and roots. He knows, in one lurks a strong poison; in another, drops which bring healing. Rhodopis, says Croesus, is like a rose, which gives forth scent, and oil for the sick and feeble, even when fading, when leaf after leaf is lost, when it waits in patience for the wind which must scatter the last petals."

"Oh, may she live long! Dearest, grant me one great desire."

"It is granted before you ask it."

"When you take me home, do not leave Rhodopis in Egypt. Let her follow us. She is so good, and loves me

so tenderly, that she is made happy by all that makes me happy, and what is dear to my heart will seem to her worthy of love."

"She shall be the first guest in our house."

"How good you are! Now I am quite happy and contented. My good old grandmother needs me. She cannot live without her child. I laugh away her anxieties; and when she sits by me and teaches me, when she sings to me, when she shows me how to use a pencil, to play the lute, then a purer light comes to her eyes; all furrows ploughed by grief become smooth; her mild eye laughs, and she forgets many dark days, and enjoys the present with gladness."

"Before we part, I will ask her if she will follow us to my distant home."

"Oh, how glad I am! And do you know that the first time of parting does not seem so dreadful. Now you are my lord and master, I suppose I may tell you all that grieves or gladdens me; but I must keep silence before others. You must know, dearest, that when you return home, we expect two little guests in our home—children of that good Phanes for whom your friend Gyges did such a noble deed. I will care for the children as a mother; and when they have been good, I will tell them pretty tales of the king's son—the brave hero who took a simple maiden for his wife—and when I describe how the prince, the young hero, looked, I shall see you distinctly, though the children will not know. I shall describe you from head to foot. My hero will rejoice in your tall figure; your golden locks will adorn him; your blue eyes will shine beneath his brow; the royal splendour of your garments will clothe his magnificent form. Your noble heart, your faithful, upright mind, your reverence for the gods, your courage, your heroism—in fact, all that is loveable and good in you shall adorn the hero of my song. The children will listen; and when they exclaim: 'Oh, how we love the prince; how good and beautiful he is; would we could see the noble youth!' then I shall press them closely to my heart, and I shall kiss them as I have kissed you; and then the children's wish will be fulfilled, for as you are enthroned in my heart, you live in me, and will be near to them. When they embrace me, they embrace you."

"I shall go to Atossa, my sister, and tell her all that I saw on my journey. When I praise the grace of the Greeks, the splendour of their works, the beauty of their women, I shall describe your beautiful form under the name of golden Aphrodite. I shall tell her of your virtues, your beauty and modesty, your singing, which forces even the nightingale to listen, your love, your tenderness. I shall describe your charms as though they belonged to divine Cypris, and I will kiss my sister when she cries: "O Aphrodite, would that I could see you!"

"Hark! what was that? My nurse claps her hands. Farewell, we must part. May we soon meet again."

"One more kiss."

"Farewell."

Melitta had fallen asleep at her post, overcome by fatigue and age. At last a loud noise awoke her from her dreams. She clapped her hands to warn the lovers and summon Sappho, for she saw by the stars that morning was not far distant.

When the old woman approached the house with her charge, she discovered that the noise which had awakened her was caused by the guests who were preparing to depart. She urged Sappho to greater speed, pushed the startled girl into the house by the back door, led her to her bedroom, and was just beginning to undress the maiden, when Rhodopis entered.

"You are still up, Sappho?" she said. "What is the meaning of this, my child?"

Melitta trembled, and was prepared with a lie. But Sappho threw herself on her grandmother's breast, embraced her tenderly, kissed her with intense affection, and told her, without reserve, the story of her love.

Rhodopis turned pale.

"Leave us," she said to the slave. Then she stood before her grandchild, put her hands on her shoulders, and said: "Look in my eyes, Sappho. Can you still look at me as cheerfully, and with the same childlike innocence, as before the Persian arrived?"

The girl looked up smiling and happy at her grandmother. Then Rhodopis drew her to her, kissed her, and

said: "Since you grew up I have striven to make you a true maiden, and to keep you from love. I meant soon to choose a suitable husband for you, to make you his wife according to the Greek custom. But the gods have willed it otherwise. Eros laughs at all barriers which the hand of man can raise; the hot Æolian blood in your veins demands love; the wild heart of your Lesbian ancestors beats also in your breast. What is done cannot be undone. Preserve the happy hours of your pure, first love, like a precious possession, in your memory, for sooner or later the present of every mortal becomes desolate and barren, so that he needs such memories to keep him from pining away. Think, in secret, of the handsome youth, bid him farewell when he returns home, but beware of expecting to meet him again. The mind of the Persian is unstable and changeable, he is tempted by novelty, and welcomes all that is strange with open arms. Your charms pleased the prince. Now he is filled with passion for you, but he is handsome and young, is wooed on all sides, and is a Persian. Leave him, lest he renounce you."

"How can I, grandmother? Have I not pledged him my troth for all eternity?"

"You children play with eternity as though it were a moment. As to your oath, I blame it, but I am glad that you keep to it, for I hate that wicked proverb which says that Zeus does not hear the oaths of lovers. Why should the deity care less for the oath taken by man in reference to what is holiest in him, than for his affirmation regarding trifling matters of property. Keep your promise, never forget your love, but learn to give up your lover."

"Never, grandmother. Would Bartja have been my friend if I could not have trusted him? Just because he is a Persian, who calls truthfulness his best virtue, I may safely hope that he will remember his oath and, in spite of the bad custom of the Asiatics, make me his sole wife."

"And if he forgets his oath you will mourn away your youth in wretchedness and with bitterness in your heart."

"O dearest grandmother, leave off saying such dreadful things. If you knew him as I do, you would rejoice with

me, and acknowledge that the Nile may dry up, and the pyramids fall, but Bartja cannot deceive me."

The girl said these words with such glad confidence and such conviction, and her dark, tearful eyes were glowing with such bliss, that the matron's face again became gracious. Sappho embraced her once more, and told her every word her lover had said, ending her long speech with the exclamation: "O, Grandmother, I am so happy, so happy, and if you go with us to Persia, there will be nothing left for me to ask of the Immortals."

"You will stretch your arms towards them again all too soon," sighed Rhodopis. "They behold the happiness of mortals with envy, they deal out evil to us lavishly, but good with niggard hands. Now go to bed, my child, and pray with me, that all may end well. I brought my morning greeting to a child, but I bid good night to a woman. May you, when a wife, offer me your mouth for a kiss as gladly as you do now. To-morrow I will speak to Cræsus about you. It will depend on his decision whether I can allow you to look forward to the Persian's return, or whether I must entreat you to forget the prince in order soon to become the wife of a Greek of my choice. Sleep well, my darling, sleep calmly; your old grandmother watches over you."

Sappho fell asleep, cradled by blissful dreams. Rhodopis watched the rising sun and bright day with open eyes, now smiling, now thoughtfully frowning.

Next morning she asked Cræsus to spare her an hour.

She told the old man, without any digression, what she had learnt from Sappho, and ended with the words: "I do not know what the Persians require of the wife of a prince, but I can assure you that Sappho seems to me worthy of the greatest of kings. She is descended from a free and noble father, and I have heard that according to your laws the rank of father alone determines that of the child. In Egypt, too, the descendants of slaves enjoy equal rights with those of princesses, if both owe their existence to the same father."

"I have listened to you in silence," answered Cræsus, "and I must tell you that, at this moment, I know as little as you do, whether to rejoice or to grieve over this love. Cambyzes, and Cassandane, the mother of Bartja and the

king, wished the prince to marry before we left. The king himself has as yet no children. If he should remain childless, the hope of continuing the race of his father Cyrus rests on Bartja, for the great founder of the Persian power had but two sons, Cambyzes and your grandchild's friend. The latter is the pride of all the Persians, the darling of court and country, the hope of all. He is as handsome as he is noble, as virtuous as he is amiable. It is true that the princes are expected to marry women of their own race, the Achæmenidæ; but the Persians have an unbounded preference for all that is foreign, and your granddaughter's beauty would delight them. Bartja's love for her would make them lenient; they would soon pardon the violation of an established custom, especially as every act of which the king approves must be submitted to by his subjects. Besides, the history of Iran presents many instances even of slaves who were the mothers of kings. The mother of the sovereign, who is almost as highly esteemed as he is himself, will oppose no obstacle to the happiness of her youngest and favourite son. When she sees that Bartja will not give up Sappho, when she sees that the bright face, the adored image of her great husband, grows gloomy, she will yield to him, so that he may again become happy, even though he wishes to marry a Scythian. Cambyzes, too, if his mother urges him at the right moment, will not refuse his consent."

"Why, then, all the difficulties are overcome!" cried Rhodopis, full of joy.

"It is not the marriage, but the time after the marriage that fills me with anxiety."

"You think Bartja——"

"I fear nothing from him. He has a pure heart, and has so long been a stranger to love that now that it has overpowered him he will love with warmth and constancy."

"But——"

"But you must consider that though all men receive the charming wife of their favourite with joy, there are a thousand women idle in the harems of the Persian nobles who will make it their business to injure the young girl who has been raised so high, with all conceivable malice and intrigue, whose greatest pleasure will be to ruin the inexperienced child and render her unhappy."

"You think very ill of the Persian women."

"They are women, and would envy her who had succeeded in winning the man whom they had desired either for themselves or their daughters. Envy easily becomes hate in the dull rooms of the harem, and these wretched creatures must seek compensation for the love and liberty they lack in satisfying their malice. I repeat, the lovelier Sappho is, the more malicious will be the enmity to which she will be exposed; and even though Bartja loved her dearly and wedded no second wife in the first few years, she would have to pass through such dreadful hours that I really do not know whether I can congratulate you on the apparently brilliant future of your granddaughter."

"I feel the same. I would rather have her wed a simple Greek than this noble son of a great king."

At this moment Bartja entered the room, led by Cnacias. He entreated Rhodopis, not to refuse him her granddaughter; expressed his passionate love for her, and swore that Rhodopis would increase his happiness if she would go to Persia with them. Then he seized Cræsus' hand, asked his pardon for having so long concealed from him, his fatherly friend, what filled his heart with gladness, and begged him to assist his wooing.

The old man listened, smiling, to the youth's passionate words, and said: "How often, my Bartja, have I warned you against love. It is a burning fire."

"But its flames are bright and shining."

"It causes pain."

"But the pain is sweet."

"It confuses the mind."

"But it strengthens the heart."

"Oh, this love!" cried Rhodopis, "Does not this boy, inspired by Eros, speak as if all his life he had been taught by an Attic orator?"

"And yet," answered Cræsus, "I call lovers the worst of all pupils. You may explain to them as clearly as possible that their passion is poison, fire, folly, death; yet, in spite of all, they will exclaim: 'But it is sweet,' and go on loving, undismayed."

At this moment Sappho entered the room. A white garment with purple-embroidered edges and wide sleeves

fell in simple folds round her delicate form, and was fastened at the waist by a golden girdle. Fresh roses gleamed in her hair, and the glittering star—her lover's first gift—adorned her bosom.

She bowed gracefully, but shyly to the old man, whose looks rested on her long. The longer he looked into the beautiful young face, the more friendly grew his expression. Memories of the past came to him; for a moment he almost grew young again. Involuntarily he approached the girl and lovingly pressed a kiss on her brow, seized her hand, led her to Bartja, and cried: "Take her; she must be your wife, though all the Achæmenidæ conspire against us."

"Have I nothing to say in the matter?" asked Rhodopis, smiling amidst her tears.

Bartja seized her right hand, Sappho her left, and two pairs of eyes looked entreatingly in her face. Then she cried, drawing herself up to her full height, like a prophetess: "May Eros, who brought you together, may Zeus and Apollo, protect you. I see you like two roses on one stalk, loving and happy in the spring of life. What summer, autumn, and winter may bring you, lies hidden in the lap of the gods. My Sappho, may the shades of your parents smile happily when these tidings of you come to them in the Nether World."

Three days later a large crowd of people again surged round the landing-place of Sais. The people had collected to bid a last farewell to the princess, who was going far away. This hour showed that, in spite of all that the priests could do, the Egyptians still clung with deep affection to the royal house.

When Amasis and Ladice embraced Nitetis for the last time with tears, when Tachot, in the sight of all the people of Sais, on the great stairs, embraced her sister amid her sobs, when finally the boat that bore away the royal bride left the land with swelling sails, few eyes remained dry.

Only the priests looked on at the moving spectacle, cold and grave as ever.

When at last the ships on which were the strangers and the Egyptian princess were caught by the south wind, they

were followed by many oaths and curses. Tachot long waved her veil to those who were leaving her. She wept unceasingly. Were her tears for the companion of her youth or for the handsome, beloved prince?

Amasis embraced his wife and daughter before all the people. He held his grandson, little Necho, high up, and the crowd broke out into loud acclamations at the sight of him. Psamtik, the child's father, stood silent and dry-eyed beside the king, who did not seem to notice him. At last Neithotep, the chief priest, approached, led the prince to his father, in spite of his reluctance, put his hand into the king's, and loudly called down the blessing of the gods on the royal house.

While he spoke all the Egyptians knelt with raised hands. Amasis embraced his son, and whispered to the chief priest, when he had finished his prayer: "Let us keep the peace for our own and Egypt's sake."

"Have you received the letter of Nebenchari?"

"A Samian pirate is pursuing Phanes' ship."

"The daughter of your predecessor, the true heir of the Egyptian throne, journeys yonder unhindered."

"The building of the Greek temple at Memphis shall be stopped."

"Isis grant us peace and happiness. May prosperity spread over Egypt."

The Greeks living at Naucratis had prepared a feast in honour of the daughter of Amasis, their protector, who was going far away.

Numerous animals were sacrificed on the altars of the Greek gods; and when the Nile boats entered the harbour, a loud "Ailinos" arose.

Maidens in festive garments offered to Nitetis a gold circlet, round which were wound thousands of scented violets, like a bridal wreath.

As the loveliest maiden in Naucratis, Sappho was allowed to present it to the princess.

Nitetis accepted the gift, and gratefully kissed her forehead. Then she entered the trireme which awaited her.

The rowers began their work, and sang the "Celeusma."¹

¹ The Greek sailors were accustomed to row in time to this song.

The south wind swelled the sails, and "Ailinos" was again uttered by thousands of voices. Bartja, from the deck of the royal ship, waved a last farewell to his betrothed. Sappho breathed a prayer to Aphrodite Euploia, the patroness of sailors. A tear bedewed her cheek, but a smile of hope and love played round her mouth, while the old slave, Melitta, who carried the girl's sunshade, wept as if she had lost her senses. But when a few leaves fell by chance from the wreath worn by her charge, she forgot her grief for a minute, and whispered softly to Sappho: "Ah, sweetheart, it is easy to see you are in love, for all girls who lose leaves from their wreath have had their hearts wounded by Eros."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARRIVAL AT BABYLON.

SEVEN weeks later a long line of chariots and riders of every description wound along the great highway that led from the west to Babylon, the gigantic city which could be seen from a long distance.

Nitetis, the Egyptian princess, sat in a gilt four-wheeled chariot, called a "Harmamaxa."¹ The cushions were covered with gold brocade; the roof was supported by wooden columns; its sides could be closed by means of curtains.

Her companions, the Persian nobles, the dethroned King of Lydia and his son, rode by the side of her chariot. Fifty carriages and six hundred sumpter-horses followed, and a regiment of Persian soldiers on splendid horses preceded the procession.

The road lay along the Euphrates, through luxuriant fields of wheat, barley, and sesame, which yielded two or even three hundredfold. Slender date palms, with heavy clusters of fruit, stood in the fields, which were intersected in all directions by canals and conduits. Although it was winter, the sun shone warm and clear in the cloudless sky. The mighty river was crowded with barges and boats which brought the produce of the Armenian highlands to the Mesopotamian plain, and forwarded to Babylon the greater part of the wares which were brought to Thapsacus² from Greece.

Engines, pumps, and waterwheels poured refreshing moisture on the fields and plantations along the banks,

¹ Asiatic travelling carriages first mentioned in Xenophon's *Anabasis*.

² Important commercial town on the Euphrates.

which were dotted with numerous villages. Everything indicated that the capital of a civilized and well-governed country was close at hand.

The carriage and suite of Nitetis stopped before a long building of brick covered with bitumen, by the side of which grew numerous plane trees. Crœsus was helped from his horse, approached the carriage of the Egyptian princess, and cried to her: "We have reached the last station-house. The high tower that stands out against the horizon is the famous tower of Bel, like your Pyramids, one of the greatest achievements of mortal hands. Before the sun sets we shall reach the brazen gates of Babylon. Permit me to help you from the carriage, and to send your women to you into the house. To-day you must dress yourself according to the custom of Persian queens, so that you may be pleasant in the eyes of Cambyses. In a few hours you will stand before your husband. How pale you are! See that your women skilfully paint joyous excitement on your cheeks. The first impression is often decisive, and this is the case with your future husband, more than with anyone else. If, as I do not doubt, you please him at first sight, you have won his heart for ever. If you displease him, he will, in accordance with his rough habits, scarcely deign to look on you again with kindness. Courage, my daughter. Above all things, remember what I have taught you."

Nitetis wiped away a tear, and returned: "How shall I thank you for all your kindness, Crœsus, my second father, my protector and adviser. O do not ever desert me. When the path of my poor life passes through sorrow and grief, remain my guide and protector, as you have been during this long journey over dangerous mountain passes. Thank you, my father, thank you, a thousand times."

With these words, the girl put her beautiful arms round the old man's neck and kissed him like an affectionate daughter.

When she entered the court of the gloomy house, a man came towards her, followed by a train of Asiatic serving women. The leader, the chief eunuch, one of the most important Persian court officials, was tall and stout. There was a sweet smile on his beardless face, valuable rings hung

from his ears; his arms and legs, his neck, his long, womanish garments, were covered with gold ornaments, and his stiff artificial curls were surrounded by a purple fillet, and sent forth a pungent odour. Boges, for this was the eunuch's name, bowed respectfully to the Egyptian and said, holding his fleshy hand covered with rings before his mouth: "Cambyzes, the ruler of the world, sends me to meet you, O queen, that I may refresh your heart with the dew of his greetings. He further sends to you, through me, his poorest slave, the garments of Persian women, that you may approach the gate of the Achæmenidæ in Median dress, as befits the wife of the greatest of rulers. These women, your servants, await your commands. They will transform you from an Egyptian emerald into a Persian diamond." Boges drew back and, with a condescending movement of his hand, allowed the host of the inn to present the princess with a most tastefully arranged basket of fruit.

Nitetis thanked both men with friendly words, entered the house, and tearfully put off the robes of her home; the thick plait, the mark of an Egyptian princess, was unfastened, and strange hands clad her in Median fashion.

Meanwhile her companions commanded a meal to be prepared. Nimble servants fetched chairs, tables, and golden utensils from the wagon; the cooks bustled about, and were so ready and eager to help each other that soon, as if by magic, a splendidly laid table, where nothing was wanting down to the very flowers, awaited the hungry travellers.

The same luxury had been displayed during the whole journey, for the sumpter-horses that followed the royal travellers carried every imaginable convenience, from gold-woven, waterproof tents down to silver footstools, and the carts that accompanied them bore bakers, cooks, cup-bearers, carvers, men to prepare ointment, wreath winders, and hairdressers.

Well-appointed inns were established at regular intervals along the high road. Here the horses that had fallen on the way were replaced by fresh ones, shady trees offered a pleasant shelter from the heat of the sun, and on the mountains the fires of the inns protected the traveller from cold and snow.

The Persian inns, which resembled our post-houses, were first established by Cyrus the Great, who sought to shorten the enormous distances between the different parts of his realm by means of well-kept roads. He had also organized a regular postal service. At every station the riders with their knapsacks found substitutes on fresh horses ready for instant departure, who, after receiving the letters which were to be forwarded, galloped off post haste, and when they reached the next inn threw their knapsacks to other riders who stood in readiness. These couriers were called Angares, and were considered the swiftest horsemen in the world.

When the company, who had been joined by Boges, the eunuch, rose from table, the door of the inn opened. A long-drawn sigh of admiration was heard, for Nitetis stood before the Persians in the splendid Median court dress, proudly exultant in the consciousness of her beauty, and yet suffused with blushes at her friends' astonishment.

The servants involuntarily prostrated themselves in the Asiatic manner, but the noble Achæmenidæ bowed low and reverently. It was as if the princess had laid aside all shyness with the simple dress of her home, and assumed the pride and dignity of a queen with the silken garments, heavy with gold and jewels, of a Persian princess.

The deep respect which had just been shown her seemed to please her. With a condescending movement of her hand she thanked her admiring friends; then she turned to the chief eunuch and said to him, kindly, but proudly: "You have done your duty. I am not dissatisfied with the robes and the slaves you have provided for me. I shall duly praise your care to my husband. Meanwhile, receive this golden chain as a sign of my gratitude."

The powerful overseer of the king's wives kissed her hand and silently accepted the gift. None of his charges had yet treated him with such pride. All the wives whom Cambyzes had owned till now were Asiatics, and, as they were acquainted with the full power of the chief eunuch, they were accustomed to do all they could to win his favour by means of flattery and submission.

Boges again bowed low to Nitetis; but, without paying any further attention to him, she turned to Croesus, and said in

a low tone: "I cannot thank you, my gracious friend, with word or gift for what you have done for me; it will be owing to you alone if my life at this court becomes, if not happy, at least peaceful." Then she continued in a louder voice, audible to her travelling companions: "Take this ring, which has not left my hand since our departure from Egypt. Its value is small, its significance great. Pythagoras, the noblest of all the Greeks, gave it to my mother when he came to Egypt to listen to the wise teachings of our priests. She gave it to me when I left home. There is a seven engraved on this simple turquoise. This number, which is indivisible, represents the health of body and soul, for nothing is less divisible than health. If but a small portion of the body suffers, the whole body is ill; if one evil thought nestles in our heart, the harmony of the soul is disturbed. Whenever you look at this seven, let it remind you that I wish you perfect enjoyment of bodily health, and the continuance of that benignity which makes you the most virtuous and therefore the most healthy of men. No thanks, my father, for I should remain in your debt though I should restore to Cræsus the wealth of Cræsus. Gyges, take this Lydian lyre of ivory, and when its strings give forth music, remember the giver. To you, Zopyrus, I give this chain, for I have noticed that you are the most faithful friend of your friends, and we Egyptians put bonds and ropes into the fair hands of our goddess of love and friendship, beautiful Hathor, as a symbol of her binding qualities. To you, Darius, the friend of Egyptian lore and the starry firmament, I give, for a keepsake, this golden ring, on which you will find the Zodiac engraved by a skilful hand. Bartja, my dear brother-in-law, you shall receive the most precious treasure I possess. Take this amulet of blue stone. My sister Tachot put it round my neck when for the last time I pressed a kiss upon her lips before we fell asleep. She told me this talisman would bring sweet happiness in love to him who wore it. She wept as she spoke, Bartja. I do not know what she was thinking of, but I hope I am carrying out her wish when I lay this treasure in your hand. Think that Tachot is giving it to you through me, her sister, and think sometimes of the garden of Sais."

She had spoken in Greek till then. Now she turned to the servants, who were waiting at a respectful distance, and said, in broken Persian: "You, too, must accept my thanks. You shall receive a thousand gold staters.¹ Boges," she added, turning to the eunuch, "I command you to see that the sum is distributed not later than the day after to-morrow! Lead me to my carriage, Cræsus!"

The old man hastened to comply with her request. While he conducted Nitetis to the carriage, she pressed his arm against her breast and whispered: "Are you satisfied with me, my father?"

"I tell you, maiden," returned the old man, "you will be the first at this court, after the king's mother, for true regal pride is on your brow, and you possess the art of doing great things with small means. Believe me, a trifling gift, chosen as you can choose, will cause greater pleasure to a nobleman than a heap of gold flung down before him. The Persians are accustomed to bestow and to receive costly gifts. They know how to enrich one another. You will teach them to make each other happy. How beautiful you are. Is that right, or do you desire higher cushions? But what is that! Do you not see clouds of dust rolling hither from the town? That must be Cambyzes, who is coming to meet you. Keep yourself upright, girl. Above all, try to bear your husband's glance, and return it. Few can bear the fire of his eye. If you succeed in meeting it without fear or embarrassment, you have conquered. Courage, courage, my daughter. May Aphrodite adorn you with her loveliest charms! To horse, my friends! I think the king is coming to meet us."

Nitetis sat very erect in the golden carriage, and pressed her hands on her heart. The cloud of dust came nearer and nearer. Now bright sunbeams were reflected in the weapons of the approaching host, and darted from the cloud of dust like lightning from a stormy sky. Now the cloud divided, and figures could be distinguished; now the approaching procession vanished behind the thick bushes at a turn of the road; and now, not a hundred feet

¹ According to Herod., i. 94, the oldest coins. Böckh and Brandis have proved that the Assyrians had fixed weights and measures at a much earlier date.

away, the galloping riders were seen distinctly, as they approached nearer and nearer.

The whole procession seemed to consist of a gay crowd of horses, men, purple, gold, silver, and jewels. More than two hundred riders, all on snow-white Nisæan steeds, whose bridles and caparisons glittered with gold bells and buckles, feathers, tassels, and embroidery, were followed by a man who was often carried away by the powerful coal-black horse on which he rode, but who generally proved to the unmanageable, foaming animal that he was strong enough to tame its wildness. The rider, whose knees pressed the horse so that the animal trembled and panted, wore a garment with a scarlet and white pattern, which was embroidered with silver eagles and falcons. His trousers were of purple, his boots of yellow leather. He wore a golden belt round his waist, in which was a short dagger-like sword, whose hilt and sheath were encrusted with jewels. The rest of his dress resembled Bartja's. His tiara, also, was surrounded by the blue-and-white fillet of the Achæmenidæ. Thick jet-black hair streamed from it. A thick beard of the same colour covered the whole lower portion of his hale, rigid face. His eyes were even darker than his hair and beard, and glittered with a fire that burned instead of warming. A deep red scar, caused by the sword of a Massagetian warrior, marked the lofty brow, large aquiline nose, and thin lips of the rider. His whole bearing bore the stamp of great power and immoderate pride.

Nitetis could not turn her eyes from his form. She had never seen anyone like him. She thought she saw the essence of all manliness in the intensely proud face. It seemed to her as if the whole world, but especially she herself, had been created to serve this man. She feared him, and yet her humble woman's heart longed to cling to this strong man as the vine clings to the elm. She did not know whether the father of all evil, terrible Seth, or the giver of all light, great Ra, was to be imagined in this form.

As light and shade alternate when the heavens are clouded at noon, so did deep red and ashy pallor appear on her face. She forgot the precepts of her fatherly friend, and

yet when Cambyses forced his wild, snorting steed to stand still by the side of her carriage, she gazed breathlessly into the flashing eyes of the man, for she knew that he was the king, though no one had told her.

The stern face of the ruler of half the world softened more and more, the longer she, urged by a strange impulse, endured his piercing glance. At last he waved his hand in welcome and rode towards her companions, who had dismounted, and who either prostrated themselves in the dust before the king, or stood bowing low, in accordance with Persian custom, hiding their hands in the sleeves of their garments.

Now he himself sprang from his horse. At the same time all his followers swung themselves out of the saddle. The carpet-bearers in his train spread, quick as thought, a heavy purple carpet on the road, so that the king's foot should not touch the dust. A few seconds later, Cambyses greeted his friends and relations with a kiss.

Then he shook Cræsus' hand, and ordered him to mount again and accompany him to Nitetis as interpreter.

The highest dignitaries hastened up and helped the king to mount. He gave the signal, and the whole procession moved on. Cræsus rode beside Cambyses by the golden carriage.

"She is beautiful and pleasing to my heart," cried the Persian to his Lydian friend. "Now translate to me faithfully what she says in answer to my questions, for I understand only Persian, Babylonian, and Median."

Nitetis had understood his words. Inexpressible joy filled her heart, and before Cræsus could answer the king she said in a low tone, in broken Persian: "How shall I thank the gods, who let me find favour in your eyes. I am not ignorant of the language of my lord, for this noble old man has instructed me in the Persian language during our long journey. Pardon me if I can answer in broken words only. My time for instruction was short, and my understanding is only that of a poor ignorant maiden."

The usually stern king smiled. His vanity was flattered by Nitetis' eagerness to gain his approbation, and this diligence in a woman seemed as strange as it was praiseworthy to the Persian, who was used to see women grow up in

ignorance and idleness, thinking of nothing but dress and intrigue.

He therefore answered with evident satisfaction: "I am glad that I can speak to you without an interpreter. Continue to try to learn the beautiful language of my fathers. My companion Croesus shall remain your teacher in the future."

"Your command fills me with joy," said the old man, "for I could not desire a more grateful or more eager pupil than the daughter of Amasis."

"She confirms the ancient fame of Egyptian wisdom," returned the king, "and I think that she will soon understand, and accept with all her soul, the teachings of the magi, who will instruct her in our religion."

Nitetis looked down. The dreaded moment was approaching. She was henceforth to serve strange gods in place of the Egyptian deities.

Cambyses did not observe her emotion, and continued, "My mother, Cassandane, shall initiate you in your duties as my wife. I will conduct you to her myself to-morrow. I repeat what you accidentally overheard. You please me. Look to it that you keep my favour. We will try to make you like our country, and because I am your friend I advise you to treat Boges, whom I sent to meet you, graciously, for you will have to obey him in many things, as he is the superintendent of the harem."

"He may be the head of the women's house," returned Nitetis. "But it seems to me that no mortal but you has a right to command your wife. Give but a sign and I will obey, but consider that I am a princess, and come from a land where weak woman shares the rights of strong men; that the same pride fills my breast which shines in your eyes, my beloved! I will gladly obey you, the great man, my husband and ruler; but it is as impossible for me to sue for the favour of the unmanliest of men, a bought servant, as it is for me to obey his commands."

Cambyses' astonishment and satisfaction increased. He had never heard any woman, save his mother, speak like this, and the subtle way in which Nitetis unconsciously recognized and exalted his power over her whole existence satisfied his self-complacency. The proud man liked her

pride. He nodded approvingly and said: "You are right. I will have a special house prepared for you. I alone will command you. The pleasant house in the hanging gardens shall be prepared for you to-day."

"I thank you a thousand times!" cried Nitetis. "If you but knew how you delight me by your gift! Your brother, Bartja, told me much of the hanging gardens, and none of the splendours of your great realm pleased us as much as the love of the king who built the green mountain."

"To-morrow you will be able to enter your new dwelling. Tell me how you and the Egyptians liked my envoys?"

"How can you ask! Who could become acquainted with noble Croesus without loving him. Who could help admiring the excellent qualities of the young heroes, your friends. They have become dear to our house, especially your beautiful brother, Bartja, who won all hearts. The Egyptians are averse to strangers, but whenever Bartja appeared among them, a murmur of admiration arose from the gaping throng."

At these words the king's face grew dark. He gave his horse a heavy blow, so that it reared, turned its head, galloped in front of his retinue, and in a few minutes reached the walls of Babylon.

Nitetis, who, as an Egyptian, was accustomed to large buildings, was, nevertheless, filled with astonishment at the extent and magnificence of this enormous town.

The walls seemed perfectly impregnable, for they were two hundred cubits high, and their breadth was so great that two carriages could easily pass each other. Two hundred and fifty high towers surmounted and fortified this huge rampart. A greater number of these citadels would have been necessary if Babylon had not been protected on one side by impenetrable marshes. The enormous city lay on both sides of the Euphrates. It was more than nine miles in circumference, and the walls protected buildings which surpassed even the pyramids and the temples of Thebes and Memphis in size.¹

¹ According to Layard, i. 1, and other writers, the ruins of Babylon still enable one to judge of the great extent of the town.

The brazen gates through which the royal procession entered had been opened widely to receive the distinguished arrivals. A fortified tower protected the entrance on either side, in front of which, as guardian, stood a gigantic winged bull of stone with a grave, bearded, human face. Nitetis looked with astonishment at this huge gate; with joyful emotion she gazed at the long wide street, which was festively decked in her honour.

As soon as the king and the golden carriage appeared the assembled crowd broke into loud acclamations, which became frantic shouts of joy when Bartja, the favourite of the people, was recognized. Cambyzes, too, had not been seen for a long while, for, in accordance with the Median custom, the king seldom appeared in public. He reigned invisible, like a deity, and his appearance among the people was to be looked forward to like a festival. So all Babylon had come out to welcome the dread ruler, and the beloved prince who was returning home. All the windows were filled with women who threw flowers at the feet of the approaching procession, and poured pleasant essences on the riders. The whole street was covered with myrtle and palm branches, green shrubs of every description stood before the doors, carpets and cloths hung out of the windows, garlands were hung from house to house, the smell of incense and sandal wood filled the air, and thousands of Babylonians in white linen tunics, coloured woollen coats, and short cloaks crowded on both sides of the road, holding in their hands long wands, ornamented with gold and silver pomegranates, birds, and roses.

All the streets through which the procession passed were wide and straight, the houses were built of brick, and were large and high. Above them, visible from all sides, towered the gigantic temple of the god Bel, with its enormous flights of stairs, which wound like huge snakes in eight great circles round the outside of the building up to the summit, which contained the sanctuary; the tower consisted of several stories, each smaller than the one on which it rested.¹

¹ This temple, supposed by many to be the Tower of Babel, Gen. xi., is mentioned by Herod. i. 181-183, Diod. ii. 8 and 9, and others. Our description of the tower is founded on various passages in the classics.

Now the procession reached the castle of the king, which was built on the same scale as the whole town. The walls surrounding the palace were covered with many coloured glazed statues, which represented strange figures, a mixture of birds, mammals, and fishes; scenes of the chase and war, and solemn processions. Towards the north, by the side of the stream, were the hanging gardens. Towards the east, on the other shore of the Euphrates, lay another smaller palace, which was connected with the first by a most wonderful structure, a solid stone bridge.

The procession moved through the brazen gates of the three walls which surrounded the palace. The horses of Nitetis' carriage stopped. Footstool bearers helped her to descend. She was in her new home, and a few minutes later in the rooms appointed for her temporary dwelling in the women's abode.

Cambyases, Bartja and his friends, still remained in the gaily carpeted courtyard, surrounded by all the magnificent dignitaries, when loud voices of women were heard and a beautiful young Persian maiden in splendid dress, wearing rich strings of pearls in her thick, fair hair, rushed into the court up to the men, pursued by several older women.

Cambyases stood smiling in front of the impetuous girl, but with a skilful movement she rushed past him, and in another moment, half laughing, half crying, she was in Bartja's arms.

The women who had followed her threw themselves on the ground at a respectful distance, but when the girl continued embracing her brother, Cambyases cried :

"For shame, Atossa. Remember that when you began to wear earrings ¹ you ceased to be a child. I do not object to your rejoicing at your brother's return, but even in her gladness a royal maiden must never forget what is seemly. Now go back to your mother. I see your attendants

The first storey, which still exists, in the midst of ruins, is 260 feet high. The walls which surrounded the temple can still be traced, and were probably 4,000 feet long and 3,000 broad.—Rich, "Collected Memoirs," first Memoir, p. 37.

¹ The Persian women received earrings when they reached their fifteenth year as a sign that they had attained a marriageable age.—*Vendidad Fargard*, xiv. 66.

yonder. Go and tell them that I shall not punish you on this happy day. If you again force your way into this court, which is closed against all who are not summoned hither, I will tell Bogen to lock you up for twelve days. Remember that, you madcap, and tell your mother I shall come to her directly with Bartja. Now give me a kiss. You will not? Wait, you obstinate child."

With these words the king sprang towards the girl, held her hands in his left hand so firmly that she cried aloud, bent back her charming little head, and in spite of her resistance kissed his sister, who ran back weeping to her attendants and into the house.

When Atossa had vanished, Bartja said: "You held the poor child too roughly, Cambyzes. She cried with pain."

The king's face darkened, but he repressed the rough answer which was ready on his lips, and said, turning towards the house: "Come to our mother; she asked me to take you to her as soon as you arrived. As usual, the women cannot rest till they have seen you. Nitetis told me you had charmed all the Egyptian women with your fair curls and rosy cheeks. Pray, while there is yet time, to Mithra, that he may grant you perpetual beauty, and preserve you from the wrinkles of old age."

"Do you mean," asked Bartja, "that I possess no virtues which may serve as an ornament to age?"

"I explain my words to no one. Come!"

"I shall ask you for an opportunity to prove that I am inferior to no Persian in manly virtue."

"The joyous acclamations of the Babylonians might have told you that you had no need of deeds to obtain praise."

"Cambyzes!"

"Let us go. We are on the eve of war with the Massagetæ. There you will have an opportunity of showing what you are and what you can do."

A few minutes later Bartja was in the arms of his blind mother, who had waited with throbbing heart for the approach of her darling, for whose return she had yearned. When at length she heard his voice, and passed her hands over the loved head, she forgot everything, and rejoiced so at her son's return that she paid no heed to her firstborn, the powerful king, who looked on with a bitter

smile while his mother poured out her intense love on his younger brother.

From his childhood every wish of Cambyzes had been fulfilled ; every sign from him had been a command. He was, therefore, unable to brook contradiction, and he gave vent to wild outbreaks of anger if contradicted by any of his subjects, and all those with whom he came in contact were his subjects. Cyrus, his father, the powerful conqueror of half the world, whose great genius had raised the small Persian nation to the pinnacle of earthly greatness, who had known how to obtain the respect of the many races he had subdued, had not known how to carry on in his small family the work of education which he had accomplished with such wonderful success in large states. He already looked on the boy Cambyzes as the future king ; he ordered his subjects to submit to the child blindly, and forgot that he who would rule must first learn to obey.

The wife of his youth and of his heart, Cassandane, had given him, first Cambyzes, then three daughters, and fifteen years later Bartja. The firstborn son had long withdrawn from the caresses of his parents when the younger boy was born and claimed for himself all the care and attention required in the first years of childhood.

The beautiful, warm-hearted, affectionate child became the idol of both parents. They gave him their love, while Cambyzes received only careful consideration from father and mother. The heir to the throne distinguished himself in many wars, by his courage, but his proud, overbearing manner won him trembling slaves, while the companions of gracious Bartja were his friends. In short, the people feared Cambyzes and trembled when he approached, in spite of the splendid gifts which he was accustomed lavishly to shower around him ; but they loved Bartja, in whom they saw the image of Cyrus, the "father of the people."

Cambyzes felt that he could not buy the love which was given voluntarily to his brother by all. He did not hate Bartja, but it vexed him to think that the boy who had distinguished himself by no brave deeds should be loved and respected as a hero and benefactor by all the

Persians. What he did not like he considered wrong; what he considered wrong he rebuked; and, since his childhood, blame from his lips had been dreaded by the highest in the land.

The enthusiastic joy of the people, the overflowing affection of his mother and sister, and, above all, the warm praise which Nitetis had bestowed on Bartja, aroused a jealousy which till then had been unknown to his proud heart. He had been most favourably impressed by Nitetis. He was greatly struck by this daughter of a powerful king, who had submitted unreservedly to his greatness, who, like him, despised all that was small; this woman who had striven diligently to acquire the Persian language merely to please him; this tall maiden whose beauty, half Egyptian, half Greek (her mother was a Greek), had enthralled him, for he had never seen her like before. He was, therefore, vexed when she praised Bartja, and his heart became susceptible to jealousy.

When he left the women's apartment with his brother he formed a rapid resolution, and said before they parted: "You asked me for an opportunity to prove your manhood. I will not refuse it. The Tapuri have revolted. I have sent an army to their frontiers. Go to Rhagæ, take the command, and show what you are and what you can do."

"Thank you, brother!" cried Bartja. "May my friends Darius, Gyges, and Zopyrus accompany me?"

"I will not refuse this favour. Behave well and do not delay, so that in three months' time you may be ready to join the great army which will set out in the spring to punish the Massagetæ."

"I will start to-morrow."

"Farewell."

"Will you grant me a wish if Auramazda preserves my life and I return victorious?"

"I will."

"O now I shall conquer though I opposed ten thousand Tapuri with but one thousand men." The youth's eyes sparkled. He was thinking of Sappho.

"I shall be glad if your words become deeds. But stay. I have something else to say. You are twenty years old, and must marry. Roxane, the daughter of the noble

Hydarnes, is of an age to marry. She is said to be beautiful, and her descent makes her worthy of you."

"My brother, do not speak to me of marriage. I ——"

"You must take a wife, for I am childless."

"But you are young, and will not remain without descendants. Besides, I do not mean to say I will never marry. Do not be angry, but do not speak to me of women now that I wish to prove my manhood."

"Then you must marry Roxane when you return from the north. But I advise you to take her with you. The Persian fights best when he has not only his greatest treasures, but also a beautiful woman to defend."

"Spare me this, my brother. By our father's soul, I adjure you, do not force me to take a wife whom I do not know and do not wish to know. Give Roxane to Zopyrus, who loves women. Give her to Darius or Bessus, who are related to Hydarnes. I should be miserable——"

Cambyzes laughed, and, interrupting his brother, exclaimed: "That sounds as if you had ceased to be a Persian and had become an Egyptian. Truly, I have long regretted that I sent a boy like you to a strange country. I am not used to contradiction, and after the war I will hear no excuses. Now, if you like, you may set forth unwedded, for I would not force you to do what might, according to you, imperil your manliness. But it seems to me as if you had some secret reasons for refusing my brotherly proposal. That would grieve me for your sake. Now set forth; after the war I will take no refusal. You know me!"

"Perhaps, after the war, I shall myself ask you to grant what I should not like to accept now. It is as unwise to force a man to be happy as it is to oblige him to do what would make him unhappy. I thank you for yielding."

"Do not try me too often. How happy you look! I really believe you are in love, and despise other women for the sake of the chosen one."

Bartja coloured to the roots of his hair, seized his brother's hand, and cried: "Do not seek to know more. Once more accept my thanks. Farewell. Will you allow me to bid Nitetis farewell when I have taken leave of my mother and Atossa?"

Cambyzes bit his lips, and fixed a piercing glance on Bartja. Then, when he thought he had detected a certain embarrassment in his brother's face, he cried in an abrupt and threatening tone: "Hasten to the Tapuri. My wife no longer needs your protection. She has other guardians."

With these words he turned his back on Bartja and went to the hall, which was resplendent with gold and jewels, where generals, satraps, judges, treasurers, scribes, counsellors, eunuchs, doorkeepers, chamberlains, dressers and undressers, cup-bearers, masters of the horse, chief huntsmen, physicians, the eyes and ears¹ of the king, and messengers of every description, awaited him.

He was preceded by heralds with long staves, and followed by a host of fan bearers, litter and footstool bearers, carpet-spreaders, and by scribes, who at once noted down punishment, or reward, according to the slightest hint of their master, and entrusted the fulfilment of the command to the proper official.

In the middle of the hall, which was as light as day, stood a gilt table which almost broke down under the weight of the gold and silver vessels, plates, goblets, and dishes, which were beautifully arranged thereon. In an adjoining room, partitioned off by purple curtains, stood a small table, the magnificent plate of which was worth several millions. The king was accustomed to eat here. The curtains hid him from those who feasted in the hall, while he could overlook the whole apartment and observe every movement of his guests. It was the greatest ambition of everyone to be considered one of the "Table Companions," and even he to whom a portion of food was sent from the king's table could boast of having received a great mark of favour.

When Cambyzes entered the hall nearly all present prostrated themselves before him. His relations, distinguished by the blue-and-white fillet on their tiaras, contented themselves with a respectful bow.

¹ The "eyes and ears" of the king may be compared with our superintendents of police. Darius may have borrowed the title from Egypt, where we find on the monuments, at an early period: "The two eyes of the king of Upper Egypt, the two ears of the king of Lower Egypt."

When the king had taken his place in his room, the companions of his table seated themselves, and the feast began. Animals roasted whole were placed on the table, and, when hunger was appeased, many courses of those rare dainties were brought which afterwards became famous even among the Greeks as "Persian dessert."

Then slaves appeared who cleared the remains of the meal from the table. Other servants brought gigantic flagons. The king came out of his room and seated himself at the head of the great table. A number of cup-bearers skilfully filled the golden goblets, and tasted the wine to show that it concealed no poison, and soon one of those drinking bouts began which in later times caused Alexander the Great to forget moderation and even old friendship.

Cambyzes was unusually silent. A suspicion had dawned in his soul that Bartja loved his new wife. Why did the youth, contrary to custom, in defiance of the obedience which the king's childless condition demanded, disregarding a duty which had often been discussed, refuse to marry a noble and beautiful maiden? Why did he wish to see Nitetis again before his departure to the army? Why did he blush when he proffered this request? Why had the Egyptian, almost unasked, praised him so highly? It is well that he is going, for he shall not rob me of the love of this woman also, thought the king. If he were not my brother I would send him to the place from which there is no return.

After midnight he ended the feast. Boges, the chief eunuch, appeared to lead him to the women's house, whither he was accustomed to go at this hour, unless he was too intoxicated.

"Phædime awaits you with impatience," said the eunuch.

"Let her wait," answered the king. "Have you seen to the restoration of the palace in the hanging gardens?"

"It will be ready to-morrow."

"Which rooms have been prepared for the Egyptian?"

"The former dwelling of your father Cyrus's second wife, Amytis."

"It is well. Nitetis is to be treated with the greatest

respect. You yourself are not to give her any commands except those with which I charge you."

Boges bowed.

"Take care that no one, not even Cræsus, sees her till I give you other orders."

"Cræsus was with her 'his evening."

"What did he want of my wife?"

"I do not know, for I do not understand Greek, but I heard Bartja's name repeated several times. I think the Egyptian received bad news. She looked sad when I asked for orders on Cræsus' departure."

"Angramainjus curse your tongue," muttered the king, turning his back on the eunuch and following the torch-bearers and servants who accompanied him to his room.

At noon on the following day Bartja rode with his friends and a host of attendants to the frontiers of the Tapuri. Cræsus accompanied the young heroes as far as the gates of Babylon. Before they exchanged the farewell embrace, Bartja whispered to his old friend: "If the messenger from Egypt has a letter for me in his knapsack, send it on to me."

"Will you be able to read the Greek characters?"

"Gyges and Eros will help me."

"Nitetis, whom I told of your departure, greets you and bids you not forget your Egyptian friends."

"Of course not."

"May the gods guard you, my son. Be gentle as your father to the rebels who revolted, not from insolence, but to gain a man's fairest possession—freedom. Remember that it is better to show kindness than to shed blood, for the sword kills, but kindness shown by a ruler makes men happy. End the war as soon as you can, for it perverts nature. In peace, sons outlive their fathers; in war, fathers survive their sons. Farewell, young heroes. May you be victorious."

CHAPTER XIII.

NITETIS'S NEW HOME.

CAMBYSES spent a sleepless night. The feeling of jealousy, unknown till then, increased his desire for the Egyptian whom he was not yet allowed to call his wife, for the Persian law decreed that the king might not marry a stranger until she had become acquainted with the Persian customs and a convert to the religion of Zoroaster.¹ According to the law a whole year ought to elapse before Nitetis could become the wife of a Persian prince; but what did Cambyses care for the law! He looked on himself as the embodiment of the law, and declared that three months would suffice for Nitetis to understand all the teachings of the magi, and to celebrate her wedding with him.

His other wives seemed hateful and distasteful to him. From his earliest youth his house had been filled with women. Beautiful girls from all parts of Asia, black-eyed Armenians, fair girls from the Caucasus, delicate maidens from the shores of the Ganges, voluptuous Babylonians, golden-haired Persians, children of the Median plains, were his; several of the daughters of the noblest Achæmenidæ were united to the king as his lawful wives.

Phædime, daughter of Otanes, niece of his mother Cassandane, had been his favourite wife till now, or rather the only one of whom it was possible to think that she was

¹ Zoroaster, properly Zarathustra or Zerethoschtro, one of the greatest lawgivers and founders of religion. It is not certain whether he was born in Bactria, Media, or Persia, and it is almost impossible to determine the date of his birth. At all events, his doctrines were well known at the time of our story. The Avesta is probably of later date.

something more to him than a bought slave. But she too seemed common and despicable to the sated king, especially when he thought of Nitetis.

The Egyptian seemed to him nobler and worthier than the others. They were fawning girls, Nitetis was a queen. The others lay in the dust at his feet. When he thought of Nitetis, he saw her standing upright, tall and proud as himself. Henceforth she was not only to take Phædime's place, but he would raise her to the same position to which his father Cyrus had raised his wife Cassandane. She alone could assist him with knowledge and counsel; the rest, ignorant as children, cared for nothing but dress and finery, for petty intrigues and worthless trifles. The Egyptian would be obliged to love him, for he was her support, her father, her brother, in a strange land.

"She must," he said to himself, and his will seemed to him equivalent to the accomplished fact. "Bartja had better beware. He shall learn what awaits those who dare to cross my path."

Nitetis also spent a restless night. The singing and noise in the women's assembly room, which adjoined her apartment, continued till past midnight. She often recognized the shrill voice of Boges, who laughed and jested with his charges. At last silence reigned in the wide halls of the palace; but she could not help thinking of her distant home and of poor Tachot, who yearned for her, and for beautiful Bartja, who, so Cræsus had told her, was to go to-morrow to war, perhaps to death. Overcome by the fatigues of the journey, she fell asleep and dreamed of her lord. She saw him riding on his black horse. The furious animal shied at the corpse of Bartja, which lay on the ground, threw the king and dragged him to the Nile, which suddenly began to flow with blood-red waves. In her terror she screamed for help. Her cry was re-echoed from the Pyramids, and became louder and more terrible, till the dreadful echo woke her. But what was that? The loud lament which she had heard in her dream fell on her waking ear. She tore open the shutters of a window and looked out. A large, splendid garden, with fountains and long avenues of trees, wet with dew, stretched before her

eyes. No sound was heard save that strange tone ; then that too died away in the morning breeze. After a short time she heard voices and noise in the distance. Then the tumult began in the great town, and she could only distinguish a hollow roar like the waves of the ocean. The cool morning air had roused her completely, and she had no desire to lie down. She again went to the window. She saw two persons come out of the house in which she dwelt. She recognised the eunuch Boges, who was talking to a beautiful Persian woman carelessly dressed. They approached her window. Nitetis hid herself behind the half-open shutter, for she thought she heard her name.

"The Egyptian is still sleeping," said the eunuch. "She must be very tired after her journey."

"Tell me quickly," said the Persian ; "do you really think this stranger may prove dangerous to me?"

"Certainly, my darling."

"What makes you think so?"

"The new wife is to obey, not my orders, but the king's."

"Is that all?"

"No, my treasure. I know the king, and can read his face as easily as a magus reads the sacred books."

"Then we must destroy her."

"That is easily said, but not so easily done, my pigeon."

"Let go, impertinent man !"

"Why, no one sees us, and you will want my help."

"Very well ; but say quickly what we must do."

"Thank you, my sweet little Phædime. Well, in the first place, we must keep quiet and wait for an opportunity. When Croesus, that detestable hypocrite, who seems to take an interest in the Egyptian, has gone away, we will lay a trap for her."

The speakers had moved on too far for Nitetis to hear any more. She closed the shutter in silent indignation, and summoned her servants to dress her. She now knew her enemies. She now knew that a thousand dangers awaited her ; but she felt exultant and proud, for she was to be Cambyzes' real wife. She had never before experienced such joyful confidence in her own worth as now, when she was opposed to these miserable beings. A wonderful con-

viction entered her heart that she would be victorious; she believed firmly in the magic power of the good and the virtuous.

"What was the meaning of that dreadful sound I heard early this morning?" she asked the chief of her Persian attendants, who was arranging her hair.

"Do you mean the gong, mistress?"

"A strange sound roused me about two hours ago."

"That was the gong which every morning awakens the children of the nobles, who are educated by the king. You will soon become accustomed to the sound. We have long ceased to notice it; indeed, when it is not heard on great holidays, the unusual silence arouses us. In the hanging gardens you will be able to see all the boys led to the bath in hot or cold weather. The poor children are taken from their mothers in their sixth year that they may be brought up under the king's eye, together with the other children of their rank."

"Are they to become acquainted with the luxury of this court at that early age?"

"No, indeed! The poor boys are very hardly used. They sleep on the bare ground and rise before the sun. They live on bread, water, and very little meat. They have no idea of what wine and vegetables are. Sometimes they are obliged to fast for days when there is no need for it; they are told that they must accustom themselves to privation. When we live at Pasargada, or Ecbatana,¹ they are certain to be led to the bath, when it is bitterly cold, and when we reside here at Susa, the hotter the sun, the more wearying the marches they are obliged to undertake."

"And these boys become such voluptuous men."

"That is always the way. The longer you hunger, the more will you enjoy your food. A young noble sees daily every imaginable splendour, knows that he is rich, and yet he is obliged to undergo privations. Is it strange that when he is at last set free he enjoys all the delights of life with increased zest? If he goes to war, or to the chase,

¹ The summer residences of the kings of Persia, where the cold is sometimes very great. Ecbatana is near Hamadân, Pasargada near Rachmet, in the highlands of Iran.

he does not mind if he has to suffer hunger and thirst. Then, in spite of his thin boots and purple trousers, he goes laughing into the mud, and sleeps as soundly on a rock as on his couch of delicate Arabian wool. You must see what bold deeds these boys do, especially when the king looks on at their drill. Cambyzes is sure to take you some day if you ask him."

"I have seen the same thing in Egypt, where both the boys and the girls are encouraged to gymnastics. My limbs were made supple by running, exercises, and games with balls and hoops."

"How strange! Here our women grow up just as they like, and learn nothing but a little weaving and spinning. Is it true that most Egyptian women actually understand the arts of reading and writing?"

"Nearly all receive instruction in these arts."

"By Mithra! you must be a clever people. Few Persians learn these difficult arts, except magi and scribes. The young nobles only learn to speak the truth, to be obedient and brave, to obey the gods, to hunt, to ride, to plant trees, and to distinguish herbs. He who wishes to learn writing must apply to the magi, as was done by noble Darius. The women are actually forbidden to acquire these sciences. But now you are ready. These pearls the king sent you this morning. They look beautiful in your black hair. May I ask you to rise? These shoes are actually too large for you. Try this pair. You look like a goddess; but it is easy to see that you are not accustomed to wearing these silken trousers, and high heels on your little boots. Walk up and down a few times, then you will soon beat all the Persian women, even in walking."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and Boges entered to lead Nitetis to blind Cassandane, in whose apartments Cambyzes awaited her.

The eunuch declared himself her most humble slave, and poured out a stream of flowery flattery, comparing her with the sun, the starry heavens, a pure well of happiness, and a rose-garden. Nitetis did not condescend to speak to him, but with beating heart entered the room of the king's mother.

The windows were closed by curtains of green Indian silk, which kept out the bright midday sun, and produced a semi-darkness soothing to the eyes of the blind queen. The floor was covered with a heavy Babylonian carpet, in which Nitetis's feet sank as though it were moss. The walls were covered with a mosaic of ivory, tortoiseshell, gold, silver, malachite, lapis lazuli, ebony, and amber. The gold frames of the seats were covered with the skins of lions, and the table at the side of the blind woman was of solid silver. Cassandane sat on a costly armchair, in violet garments embroidered with silver. A long veil of delicate Egyptian lace covered her snow-white hair; its long ends were wound round her neck and tied together in a large bow under her chin. She was between sixty and seventy years of age. Her face, framed by the lace veil, was remarkably regular, and bespoke great intelligence, sincere kindness, and warm affection.

Her sightless eyes were closed, but one expected to see a pair of mild, pleasant stars when she opened them. She was stately and well grown. Her whole appearance was worthy of the widow of Cyrus the great and good.

On a little stool at the feet of the queen sat her youngest child, Atossa, drawing long threads from her golden spindle. Opposite her stood Cambyses, and in the background, half hidden in the dim light of the room, was the Egyptian oculist, Nebenchari.

When Nitetis had crossed the threshold of the room, the king came towards her and led her to his mother. The daughter of Amasis sank on her knees before the venerable queen and kissed her hand with sincere feeling.

"You are welcome," said the blind woman, laying her hand on the maiden's head. "I have heard much to your advantage, and hope to win a dear daughter in you."

Nitetis again kissed the delicate hand of the queen and answered in a low voice: "How I thank you for those words. Cyrus' wife, permit me to call you mother. My tongue, which is used to pronounce this sweet name, trembles with joy now that, for the first time for weeks, I may again say, 'My mother.' O, I will try with all my heart to be worthy of your kindness, but may you also

fulfil what your dear face seems to promise. Help me with counsel and advice in this strange land; let me find a refuge at your feet when longing overcomes me, and my heart is too weak to bear its joy or sorrow alone. Let all be said in the words: be my mother."

Cassandane felt warm tears falling on her hand. She touched the brow of the weeping girl kindly with her lips, and said: "I fully understand your feelings. My heart and my apartments will always be open to you, and as I call you daughter with my whole heart, so do you trust me and call me mother. In a few months you will be my son's wife, and perhaps the gods will grant you a gift which will enable you to dispense with a mother, because you feel yourself a mother."

"Auramazda grant it!" cried Cambyzes. "I am glad, Mother, that my wife pleases you, and I know that she will be happy among us as soon as she has learnt our Persian customs. If she is attentive, she will be able to wed me in four months."

"But the law—," began his mother.

"I command that we marry in four months!" cried the king, "and I should like to see who would dare oppose me. Farewell. See carefully to the queen's eyes, Nebenchari, and if my wife allows it, you may visit her to-morrow, as you are her countryman. Farewell. Bartja sends greetings. He is on his way to fight against the Tapuri."

Atossa silently wiped away a tear, but Cassandane said: "You might have left the boy with us for a few months. Your general, Megabyzus, will be able to punish a small nation like the Tapuri without his assistance."

"I do not doubt it," returned the king. "But Bartja himself longed for an opportunity to show his courage, so I sent him to the scene of war."

"Could he not have waited for the war against the Massagetæ, in which greater glory can be won?" asked the queen.

"And if he is hit by the arrow of one of the Tapuri," cried Atossa, "you will have robbed him of a man's holiest duty; you will have prevented him from avenging our father's soul."

"Silence!" thundered Cambyses, "lest I have to teach you what behaviour is fit for women and children. That child of fortune, Bartja, will come back safe and, let us hope, deserve the love which is now bestowed on him far too generously as alms."

"How can you speak so? Is not your brother adorned by every manly virtue? Is it his fault that he has had no opportunity to distinguish himself in war like you, Cambyses? You are the king, whose orders I obey, but I could blame my son because, for what cause I know not, he has robbed his blind mother of the greatest joy of her old age. Bartja would have been willing to stay with us till the war against the Massagetæ, but you obstinately willed it otherwise—"

"And what I will is right," interrupted Cambyses, pale with anger. "I wish never to hear of this again."

With these words he abruptly left the room, and, accompanied by the great retinue, which never left him, proceeded to the reception hall.

An hour had passed since Cambyses left his mother's room, and Nitetis was still kneeling beside Atossa at the queen's feet.

The Persians listened to the narrative of their new friend, and were unwearied in their inquiries after the wonders of Egypt.

"O how I would like to visit your country!" cried Atossa. "Your Egypt must be quite different from Persia, and all that I have seen as yet. The fertile shores of the huge river, which must be greater than even the Euphrates; the temples with their coloured pillars, and those artificial mountains, the Pyramids, where the ancient kings lie buried—all these things must be magnificent to behold. I think your feasts must be the most beautiful of all, where men and women associate freely. We Persians may feast with the men on New Year's Day and on the birthday of the king, but we are forbidden to speak; it would even be improper if we raised our eyes. How different with you. By Mithra, Mother, I should like to be an Egyptian, for we poor creatures are only miserable slaves; and yet I feel that I too am the child of great Cyrus, and not inferior to men. Do I not speak the truth, and can I not command

and obey? Do I not long for fame; could I not learn to ride, to use the bow, to fight, to swim, if I had only been able to gain strength, and had an opportunity?"

The girl had risen from her seat with flaming eyes, and swung her spindle without seeing that the flax became entangled and the thread broke.

"Remember what is seemly," said Cassandane, in a warning voice. "Woman must submit humbly to her quieter destiny, and not strive to emulate the deeds of men."

"But there are women who live like men!" cried Atossa. "By the Thermodon, in Themiscyra, and by the Iris river, in Comana, live the Amazons, who have waged great wars, and still go about in the armour of men."

"From whom did you hear that?"

"My nurse, old Stephanion, from Sinope, whom my father brought as a prisoner of war to Pasargada, told me so."

"But I can tell you the truth," said Nitetis. "There are certainly a number of women in Themiscyra and Comana who dress like warriors, but they are merely priestesses, who dress like the warlike goddess they serve, in order to show the worshippers the image of the deity in their own form. Croesus says there never was an army of Amazons; but the Greeks, who know how to turn everything into a beautiful legend, transformed these priestesses whom they had seen from armed servants of a goddess into a nation of warlike women."

"But then they are liars!" cried the disappointed child.

"Truth is certainly not as sacred to the Greeks as to you," returned Nitetis. "They do not call it lying, but poetry, when they invent such fables and sing them to their astonished audience, after arranging them in skilful measures and beautiful words."

"It is the same with us," said Cassandane. "Have not the bards who praise my husband's deeds altered and improved on the history of Cyrus's youth in strange fashion without being called liars? But tell me, my daughter, is it true that the Greeks are handsomer than other people, and that they understand all the arts better than even the Egyptians?"

"I cannot venture to decide on that point. Our works of art are quite different from those of the Greeks. When I went into our great temples to pray, I always felt as though I must prostrate myself in the dust before the great power of the gods, and beg them not to crush me, a little worm. On the steps of the temple of Hera at Samos I was forced to raise my hands and thank the gods joyfully that they had made the world so fair. In Egypt I always believed what I had been taught: 'Life is sleep; in the hour of death we shall first awaken to real existence in Osiris' realm.' In Greece I thought I was born to enjoy this world, which blossoms and shines around me, full of beauty and happiness."

"O, tell us more of Greece!" cried Atossa. "But first, Nebenchari must again bandage my mother's eyes."

The oculist, a tall grave man in the white robes of an Egyptian priest, began his work; when he had finished, Nitetis greeted him kindly, and he withdrew to the background in silence. A eunuch entered the room and asked if Cræsus might pay his respects to the king's mother.

Soon after the old man entered, and was greeted with sincere pleasure as an old and tried friend of the royal family. Atossa impetuously embraced her friend, who had been absent so long, the queen held out her hand to him, and Nitetis greeted him as a beloved father.

"I thank the gods that they have allowed me to see you again!" cried the vigorous old man. "At my age, every year must be accepted as an unmerited gift of the gods; while youth looks on life as a matter of course, as something which belongs to it by right."

"How I envy you your love of life," sighed Cassandane. "I am younger than you, yet every new day, whose dawn the gods refuse to let me see, seems to me a new punishment of the immortals."

"Do I hear great Cyrus' wife?" asked Cræsus. "Since when have courage and confidence left Cassandane's strong heart? You will have your sight restored, I tell you, and like me you will thank the gods for a beautiful old age. He who has been very ill values the blessing of health a hundredfold, and he who was blind and has his sight

restored must be a special favourite of the eternal gods. Imagine the joy of the moment when for the first time after long years you see the light of the sun, the faces of your beloved, the beauty of all creation, and confess that the splendour of that moment could compensate you for a whole lifetime of blindness. When you are cured a new life will dawn on you in your old age, and I already hear you agreeing with my friend Solon."

"What did he say?" asked Atossa.

"He wished that Memnemos of Colophon, who sang that a beautiful life should end at sixty, would amend his verses and change the sixty into eighty."

"O no!" cried Cassandane. "A long existence would seem dreadful to me, even though Mithra restored my sight. Without my husband I am like a traveller who wanders through the desert without aim or guide."

"Do you, then, quite forget your children and this realm, whose birth and growth you saw?"

"O no! but my children do not need me any longer, and the ruler of the kingdom does not wish to listen to a woman's advice."

Atossa seized the queen's right hand, Nitetis her left, and the Egyptian cried: "For the sake of your daughters and their happiness you must wish for a long life. What should we be without your help and protection?"

Cassandane smiled and murmured almost inaudibly: "You are right, my children. You will need your mother."

"In these words I recognize the wife of Cyrus!" cried Cræsus, kissing the queen's robe. "I tell you, Cassandane, no one knows how soon we shall need you. Cambyzes is made of hard steel which calls forth sparks wherever it strikes. It is your duty to see that these sparks kindle no fire in the midst of those you love best. You are the only one who can speak words of warning when the king is angry. You alone he considers his equal. He despises the opinion of others, but his mother's blame touches him. It is, therefore, your duty to act as mediator between the king and the realm and your children, and to see that your son's pride is not humbled by the punishment of the gods, instead of by your rebuke."

"If I could only bring that about," returned Cassandane. "But how seldom my proud son heeds his mother's advice."

"But he must at least listen when you advise," continued Cræsus, "and that is a great gain, for though he may not follow your advice, it will at least vibrate in his heart like a divine voice, and restrain him from many a crime. I will remain your ally, for I, who was charged by his dying father to help him with word and deed—I too may sometimes venture boldly to oppose his excesses. We two are the only people at this court whose blame he fears. Let us be brave, and faithfully perform our office of counsellors—you from love of Persia and your child, I from gratitude to the great man who once gave me liberty and life. I know you regret that you did not educate Cambyzes differently, but you must avoid repentance as you would a dangerous poison. To repair, not to repent, that is the remedy for the faults of the wise. Repentance consumes the heart, but reparation fills it with noble pride and forces it to beat with greater strength."

"We Egyptians," said Nitetis, "count repentance among the forty-two deadly sins. 'Thou shalt not consume thy heart,' says one of our chief commandments."

"You remind me," said the old man, "that I have undertaken to arrange your time for instruction in the Persian customs, religion, and language. I would gladly have withdrawn to Barene, the town which Cyrus gave me, to repose in that quiet and lovely mountain valley; for your sake and the king's, I will remain here and continue to instruct you in the Persian tongue. Cassandane herself will initiate you into the customs of the women of this court. Oropastes, the chief priest, will, in accordance with the king's command, teach you the Persian doctrines. He is to be your spiritual, I your temporal guardian."

Nitetis, who had smiled contentedly till then, now looked down and asked in a subdued voice—

"Am I to become false to the gods of my home, to whom I have prayed till now, and who never left my prayers unanswered? Can I, may I forget them?"

"You can, may, and must," said Cassandane, firmly.

"The wife must not have other friends than those of her husband. The gods are the mightiest and truest friends of man, and it is your duty as a woman to honour them, and to close your heart against the gods and superstitions of your home as you would close your house against strange suitors."

"Besides," said Croesus, "we do not wish to rob you of the deity; we give it you under another name. For as truth is always the same, whether you call it 'Maa,' like the Egyptians, or 'Aletheia,' like the Greeks, so the deity itself will never change. See, my daughter, I myself, when I was still king, sacrificed to the Greek Apollo with perfect sincerity, and believed that I should not offend the Lydian sun-god Sandon by this act of piety. The Ionians pray reverently to the Asiatic Cybele, and now, since I have become a Persian, I raise my hands to Mithra, Auramazda, and beautiful Anahita.¹ Pythagoras, whose teachings are not unknown to you, prayed to but one god. He calls him Apollo, because the pure light and harmony, which he looks on as the highest of all things, are derived from this deity as from the Greek sun-god. Xenophanes of Colophon² scoffs at the multiform gods of Homer, and places one god on the throne, the ever-generating force of nature, whose being is thought, reason, eternity. All things proceed from him; his is the strength which alone is unchangeable, while the matter from which things are created, undergoes constant and complete change. The intense longing for a great being over us, on whom we can lean when our own strength does not suffice; the wonderful impulse in our heart, which seeks a trustworthy confidant of all our joys and sorrows, the gratitude we feel at the sight of this beautiful world, and the gifts of fortune which fall to our share in such abundance, all this we call piety. Preserve this feeling, but consider that it is not the Egyptian, the Persian, or the Greek gods who rule the world, but they are all one deity, one and indivisible, who guides the destinies

¹ Anahita or Ardî-Çûra, the goddess of wells, who may be compared to the Greek Aphrodite. All water flowed from the well Anahita, which had the power of purification.

² A celebrated freethinker, who underwent much persecution on account of the scorn with which he treated the gods of Homer.

of all nations and all mortals, though we call them by different names and represent them under different forms."

The Persian women listened in astonishment to the old man; their powers of conception were too untrained to enable them to follow Cræsus. Nitetis understood him and cried: "Ladice, my mother, the pupil of Pythagoras, taught me the same, but the Egyptian priests call these views criminal and their inventors impious. I therefore tried to banish these opinions from my heart. Now I will no longer resist them. What wise and pious Cræsus believes, cannot be impious. Let Oropastes come, I am ready to listen to his teaching, and let him change our Ammon, the god of Thebes, into Auramazda; Isis or Hathor into Anahita. I will look up with reverence to the divinity who embraces the whole world, who lets all things grow and blossom here, who also casts balm and comfort into the hearts of the Persians who turn to him in prayer."

Cræsus smiled; he had thought Nitetis would find it more difficult to renounce the gods of her home, for he knew the stubborn mind of the Egyptian, which clings to all that tradition and teaching have bestowed. He had forgotten that the girl's mother was a Greek, and that the Pythagorean doctrines were not unknown to Amasis' daughters. Finally, he did not know the intense desire of the girl to win the approval of her proud lord. Amasis himself, though he honoured the Samian sage, though he yielded in many things to Greek influence, and might with justice be called an Egyptian freethinker, would rather have died than change his many gods for the idea "Deity."

"You are a docile pupil," said Cræsus, laying his hand on his charge's head. "As a reward you shall be allowed every morning and every afternoon till sunset to visit Cassandra, or to receive Atossa in the hanging gardens."

This joyful news was received by the young Persian with loud exclamations of delight, and with a grateful glance by the Egyptian.

"Finally," continued Cræsus, "I have brought you balls and hoops from Sais, so that you may enjoy yourselves in Egyptian fashion."

"Balls!" said Atossa, in astonishment; "what shall we do with heavy wooden balls?"

"Do not be afraid," laughed Crœsus; "the balls we mean are small and dainty, made of an inflated fish-skin or leather. A two-year-old child can throw them, while you would find it hard enough to lift one of those wooden balls with which the Persian boys and youths play. Are you satisfied with me, Nitetis?"

"How shall I thank you, my father?"

"Listen again to your arrangements for the future. In the morning you will visit Cassandane, chat with Atossa, and listen to your noble mother's teaching."

The queen nodded approvingly.

"At noon I shall come to teach you Persian, often talking with you of Egypt and your family. You do not object?"

Nitetis smiled.

"Every other day Oropastes will attend you and initiate you in the Persian religion."

"I will take great pains to understand him quickly."

"In the afternoon you will be with Atossa as long as you like. Are you satisfied?"

"Oh, Crœsus!" cried the girl, and kissed the old man's hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.

THE following day Nitetis took possession of the country house in the hanging gardens, and spent her time somewhat monotonously, but happily and diligently, according to Crœsus' arrangements. Every day she was taken to Cassandane and Atossa in a carefully-closed litter. The blind queen soon became a loved and loving mother, and the wild, merry daughter of Cyrus almost took the place of Tachot, the Egyptian's sister, on the distant shores of the Nile. Nitetis could not have desired a better companion than this bright child, whose jests and gaiety prevented her friend from feeling homesick or discontented. The gravity of the one was lessened by the cheerfulness of the other; the wild spirits of the Persian were toned down to a calm happiness under the influence of the equable, noble Egyptian.

Crœsus and Cassandane were equally satisfied with their new daughter and pupil. Oropastes, the magus, daily praised the capacity and intelligence of the maiden to Cambyzes. Nitetis learnt the Persian language unusually well and quickly. The king went to his mother, whenever he thought he would find the Egyptian there; and every day he gave her valuable jewels and dresses. The greatest favour he showed her was that he never visited her in her country house in the hanging gardens. This conduct showed that he intended to include her among the small number of his wedded wives—a favour which many princesses who lived in his harem could not boast of.

The grave, beautiful girl strangely fascinated the wild, powerful man. Her mere presence seemed to suffice to soften his stubborn mood. He looked on for hours at the

games of the girls, and kept his eyes fixed on the graceful Egyptian. Once when a ball fell into the water, he sprang after it in his heavy garments, and saved it. Nitetis screamed aloud when the king prepared for this unexpected act of chivalry; but Cambyses smiled as he gave her the dripping toy, and said: "Take care, or I shall have to frighten you often." At the same time he took a gold chain studded with jewels from his neck, and gave it to the blushing girl, who thanked him with a glance that showed what she felt for her future husband.

Crœsus, Cassandane, and Atossa soon saw that Nitetis loved the king. Her fear of the proud man had changed to a deep passion. She thought she should die if she did not see him. He seemed to her mighty and splendid as a god. Her wish to possess him seemed insolent and criminal, but the satisfaction of that wish seemed to her fairer than her return home—than a reunion with those whom till now she had loved exclusively.

She was herself scarcely conscious of her passion, and tried to believe that she feared him, and trembled with terror, not longing, before he came. Crœsus soon read her heart, and made his favourite blush deeply when he sang with his quavering voice the latest song of Anacreon, which Ibycus had taught him at Sais:—

"We read the flying courser's name
Upon his side, in marks of flame,
And by their turbaned brows alone
The warriors of the East are known.
But in the lover's glowing eyes
The inlet to his bosom lies,
Through them we see the small faint mark
Where love has dropped his burning spark."¹

The days, weeks, and months passed on in work and play, and in mutual love. Cambyses' command: "You must like to be with us!" was obeyed; the Mesopotamian spring (January, February, March) which follows the rains of December in those districts was over; during the spring equinox, the great feast of the Asiatics, the celebration of the new year had been kept; the sun of May began to burn with hot rays, and Nitetis felt at

¹ Translated by Thomas Moore.

home in Babylon; and all the Persians knew that the young Egyptian had supplanted Phædime, Otanes' daughter, in the king's favour, and was certain to become the privileged wife of Cambyses.

The credit of the chief eunuch, Boges, declined, for it was known that the king no longer entered the harem, and the eunuch only owed his influence to the women who were formerly able to gain by flattery from Cambyses what he wanted for himself or others. The offended man consulted with the fallen favourite, Phædime, as to how the Egyptian might be ruined; but their most cunning plots and intrigues were wrecked on the love of Cambyses, and the stainless life of the royal bride.

Phædime, the impatient, humiliated woman, longed for vengeance, and continually urged cautious Boges to take some decisive step; but he advised her to wait patiently.

At last, after several weeks, he came to her, full of joy, and cried: "When Bartja returns, my treasure, then our hour of vengeance will have come. I have thought of a plot which will ruin the Egyptian as surely as my name is Boges."

With these words he rubbed his smooth, fat hands, and, smiling as usual, looked as thoroughly satisfied as though he had done a good deed. He did not give Phædime even a hint of his plan, and said, in answer to her urgent questions: "I would rather lay my head in a lion's jaws than confide my secret to a woman's ear. I certainly esteem your courage; but I must ask you to remember that a man's courage is shown in action, a woman's in obedience. Therefore, do what I tell you, and await patiently what the future may bring."

Nebenchari, the oculist, still tended Cassandane, but he kept back from all intercourse with the Persians, and on account of his silent nature his name soon became proverbial. At court every happy person was called a "Bartja," every sullen one a "Nebenchari." He spent the daytime in silence in the rooms of the king's mother, turning over great papyrus scrolls. At night, with the consent of the king and the Satrap of Babylon, Tritantæchmes, he ascended one of the high towers on the walls to observe the stars.

The Chaldæan priests, the ancient students of astronomy, offered to let him make his observations on the summit of the great Temple of Bel, but he refused their invitation, and remained in proud seclusion. When Oropastes, the priest, wished to explain to him the celebrated Babylonian gnomon, which Anaximander had also introduced into Greece, he smiled scornfully, and turned his back on the chief Median priest, saying: "We knew that before you knew what an hour was."

Nitetis had greeted him kindly, but he took no notice of her—he even seemed to avoid her purposely. When she asked him one day: "Do you see any evil in me, Nebenchari, or have I offended you?" he returned: "You are a stranger to me; for how should I count those among my friends who so willingly and so quickly become faithless to those they love best, and to the gods and customs of their home?"

Boges soon saw that the oculist was offended with the future wife of the king. He therefore tried to make him his ally. But Nebenchari rejected his flattering overtures, his presents, and attentions with dignity.

As often as an Angare entered the court of the palace with news for the king, Boges hastened to inquire whence he came, and whether he had heard anything of the army which was fighting the Tapuri?

At last the wished-for messenger appeared, brought the news that the rebellious tribe had been subdued, and that Bartja would soon return home.

Three weeks elapsed. Messenger after messenger announced the approach of the victorious prince; the streets were again gaily decked; the army entered Babylon. Bartja thanked the rejoicing crowd, and soon after was clasped in his mother's arms.

Cambyzes, too, received his brother with sincere pleasure, and led him to Cassandane, when he knew that Nitetis was with her. His heart was filled with the certainty that the Egyptian loved him. He wanted to show Bartja that he trusted him, and called his former jealousy foolish madness.

His love made him gentle and kind. He was never weary of giving and of doing good. His fury was assuaged,

and the crows, which flew round Babylon, encircled, with screams of hunger, the spot where the heads of the executed were usually exhibited in great number, as a terrible warning.

The credit of the noble Persians of the race of the Achæmenidæ, increased with the decreasing influence of the eunuchs, a class of men who first entered Cyrus' gates when Media, Lydia, and Babylon were united, and who filled the highest offices of state and court. Cambyses began to listen to the advice of his relations rather than to that of the eunuchs, and thus served the interests of his country.

Old Hystaspes, the king's cousin, the father of Darius, and governor of the original province of Persia, who generally lived at Pasargada, Pharnaspes, his grandfather on the mother's side, Otanes, his uncle and father-in-law, Intaphernes, Aspathines, Gobryas, Hydarnes, the general Megabyzus, Zopyrus' father, the ambassador Prexaspes, noble Cræsus, the old hero Araspes,—in short, all the noblest Persian chiefs were at this time assembled at the king's court.

In addition, all the nobles of the kingdom, the satraps, or governors of the provinces, and the chief priests of all the towns, were assembled in Babylon to celebrate the king's birthday.¹

All the chief officials and ambassadors from the different provinces came to the capital to present gifts to the ruler, to congratulate him, and to take part in the great sacrifices in which thousands of horses, deer, bulls, and donkeys were killed in honour of the gods.

All the Persians received presents on this festive day, and everyone was allowed to ask a favour of the king, which was seldom refused. The inhabitants of all the towns feasted at the king's expense. Cambyses had decided that his marriage with Nitetis should take place eight days after his birthday, and all the great nobles were to be invited. The streets of Babylon were thronged with strangers, the gigantic palaces on either side of the Eu-

¹ The king's birthday was the greatest festival in Persia. Herod., i. 133.

phrates were filled to overflowing, all the houses were decorated.

The zeal of his people, and the numerous ambassadors who represented his whole realm, did much to heighten the king's joy.

His pride was satisfied, and Nitetis supplied the one thing wanting to his heart, the presence of love. He thought he was happy for the first time in his life, and distributed his gifts not only because a king of Persia must give, but because he took real pleasure in giving.

The general, Megabyzus, could not sufficiently praise the warlike deeds of Bartja and his friends. Cambyzes embraced the young heroes, gave them gold chains and horses, called them his brothers, and reminded Bartja of the favour he had promised to grant when he returned victorious.

The youth looked down and did not know how to express his demand. The king laughed, and cried: "Look, friends, our young hero is blushing like a girl. I think I shall have to grant a great favour; he had better wait till my birthday, and at the feast, when wine has given him courage, he shall whisper to me what he fears to ask to-day. Let your demand be great, Bartja. I am happy, and wish to see all my friends happy."

Bartja smiled at him, and went to his mother to tell her for the first time what his heart longed for.

He feared he should meet with opposition; but Croesus had prepared the way well, and told the blind queen much in praise of Sappho, her virtue and grace; he had praised her talents and accomplishments, till at last the girls declared Rhodopis' grandchild must have given the old man a magic potion, and Cassandane, after a short resistance, yielded to her favourite's entreaty.

"A Greek the lawful wife of a Persian prince!" cried Cassandane. "That has never happened before. What will Cambyzes say? How shall we gain his consent?"

"You need not be anxious about that, mother," answered Bartja. "I am as certain of my brother's consent as I am that Sappho will be an ornament to our house."

"Croesus has told me much in praise of the maiden, and I am glad that you have at length determined to marry;

but it seems to me that it is not a fitting union for a son of Cyrus. Have you considered that the Achæmenidæ will scarcely acknowledge a child of this Greek woman as their king if Cambyses remains without children?"

"I am not afraid, for I do not desire the crown. Besides, many a Persian king was the son of a woman of lower rank than my Sappho. I am certain that my relations will not blame me when I show them the treasure I have won on the shores of the Nile."

"May Sappho be like our Nitetis. I love her like my own daughter, and bless the day when she entered this land. Her warm glances have melted your brother's hard nature, her goodness and gentleness beautify my darkened age, her gentle seriousness has changed your sister Atossa from a wild child to a maiden. Call the girls, who are playing in the garden, that we may tell them that you are about to bestow a new friend on them."

"Pardon me, mother," returned Bartja, "if I beg you not to mention the matter to my sister till we have the consent of the king."

"You are right, my son. We must conceal your wish from the girls, even if it were only to save them from possible disappointment. The disappointment caused by the failure of a treasured hope is harder to bear than an unexpected sorrow. Let us, therefore, await your brother's consent. May the gods bestow their blessing on you."

Early on the morning of the royal birthday, the Persians sacrificed on the shores of the Euphrates. A large silver altar stood on an artificial mound. On it burned a great fire which sent flames and pleasant odours up to heaven. White-robed magi fed the flames with daintily-cut pieces of the finest sandal-wood, and stirred the flames with bundles of rods.

The priests wore around their heads the *Paiti-dhana*,¹ the end of which covered their mouths, and thus kept their impure breath from the pure fire. The sacrificial beasts had been killed on a meadow beside the river, their flesh cut up, strewn with salt, and spread on grass and clover,

¹ All Persians were obliged to put this square cloth to their mouths when they prayed.

myrtle flowers and laurel leaves, so that nothing dead and bloody should touch Auramazda's daughter, the patient, sacred earth.

Now Oropastes, the chief priest, approached the fire, into which he threw fresh butter. The flames sprang up high. All the Persians fell on their knees and hid their faces, for they thought the flame sprang up to its father, the great god. Then the magus took a mortar, placed leaves and stalks of the sacred herb, haoma,¹ in it, crushed them, and poured the reddish juice of the plant, the food of the gods, on the flames.

Finally, he raised his hands to heaven and sang a prayer from the sacred books, while other priests threw fresh butter on the flames and caused them to leap up wildly. In this prayer the blessing of the gods was called down upon all that was good and pure, more especially on the king and the whole realm. The good spirits of light, life, truth, noble deeds, the beneficent earth, the refreshing water, glittering metals, pastures, trees—all pure beings were praised; the evil spirits of darkness and falsehood who deceive men, of illness, death, sin, deserts, great cold, desolating droughts, unsightly dirt, and all vermin, together with their creator, evil Angramainjus, were cursed, and finally all present joined in the solemn prayer: "Purity and glory await the just."

The king's prayer ended the sacrificial solemnities. Cambyzes, in his rich robes, mounted a golden chariot ornamented with cornelians, topazes, and amber, and drawn by four snow-white Nisæan horses, and went to the great reception hall to receive the dignitaries and the ambassadors of the provinces.

As soon as the king and his retinue had gone, the priests chose the best pieces of the sacrificial meat for themselves, and allowed the crowd to take away what was left. The Persian gods despised the sacrifice as food. They only desired the souls of the sacrificed animals, and many of the poorer people, and especially the poor priests, lived on the meat supplied by the abundant royal sacrifices.

¹ Haoma, or Soma, a plant the juice of which was believed to be the food of the gods. It was tasted and dropped on the flames at certain religious ceremonies. Haoma was also a god.

All Persians were expected to pray as the priests had prayed.

Their religion forbade the individual to make any request for himself to the gods. Every pious mind was to pray for the good of all Persians, but more especially for the king. Each individual was part of a whole, so that he was made happy when the gods bestowed their blessing on the realm. This sublime self-abnegation of their individuality in favour of the whole community had made the Persians great. If the king was prayed for in particular this was because he was looked upon as the embodiment of the whole realm.

The Egyptian priests represented the Pharaohs as actual deities, while the Persians merely called their kings the sons of the gods; and yet the latter enjoyed a freer exercise of their power, for they had known how to free themselves from the tutelage of the priestly caste which, as we have seen, was accustomed to exert a strong influence on the Pharaohs in all important matters, even though it did not actually dictate to them.

The Asiatics were quite free from the intolerance which made the Egyptians endeavour to banish all strange gods from the Nile. The Babylonians, conquered by Cyrus, were allowed to pray to their former gods after they were incorporated with the great Asiatic kingdom. Jews, Ionians, the inhabitants of Asia Minor, in fact, all the races which obeyed Cambyzes, remained undisturbed in the practice of their inherited religion and customs.

Hence, on the king's birthday, the fires of the magi were not the only sacrificial flames lighted in Babylon. Others were raised by the ambassadors to the feast in honour of the gods they worshipped at home.

The great town looked from a distance like a huge furnace, for dense clouds of smoke hovered over its towers, obscuring the light of the hot May sun.

When the king had reached his palace the numerous ambassadors formed a procession, which streamed through the straight streets of Babylon to the palace.

Myrtles and palms, roses, poppies, and oleander blossoms, leaves of the silver poplar and laurels, were strewn on all the paths. Incense, myrrh, and a thousand pleasant

odours, were wafted through the air; flags and carpets fluttered from every house. Although it was only a short time since the Persians had subdued the Babylonians, they, like all Asiatics, wore their chains, as though they had been an ornament, as long as they feared their conqueror's power. The shouts and joyous acclamations of the immense crowds rose above the loud tones of the Median trumpets, the soft notes of the Phrygian flutes, the cymbals and harps of the Jews, the tambourines of the Paphlagonians, the lutes of the Ionians, the kettle-drums of the Syrians, the shells and trumpets of the Aryans from the mouth of the Indus, and the loud tones of the Bactrian battle trumpet.

The perfume and splendid colours, the glittering gold and jewels, the neighing horses, the shouting and singing, served to stun the mind and fill all hearts with exhilarating joy.

None of the ambassadors had come empty handed. One brought a string of noble horses, another gigantic elephants and monkeys; a third, several rhinoceroses and buffaloes covered with cloths and tassels; a fourth, Bactrian camels with two humps, and wearing gold rings round their shaggy necks. Others brought wagons filled with rare kinds of wood, ivory, costly stuffs, gold and silver vessels, casks filled with gold dust and bars of gold, rare plants for the gardens, and foreign animals for the royal preserves, among them antelopes, zebras, rare species of monkeys and birds. The birds were chained to green trees, and were a pleasant sight as they flapped their wings.

These presents were the tribute of the subjugated tribes. After they had been inspected by the king, the treasurers and scribes weighed and tested them; they either found them satisfactory, or refused them as insufficient. In the latter case the niggardly givers had to pay double.

The procession reached the gates of the state palace without delay, for the whip-bearers and soldiers, who formed a line on each side of the road, kept back the crowds of people.

The royal procession to the place of sacrifice had been splendid (five hundred richly decked horses were led behind

the king's carriage), and the procession of ambassadors might be called magnificent; but the appearance of the great throne room was dazzling and fairylike.

The gold throne stood in the background, raised by six steps, each of which was guarded by two golden dogs; over it was a purple canopy supported by four golden pillars set with jewels; on its roof were two winged disks, the *Feruer*¹ of the king.

Behind the throne stood the fan-bearers, court officials of high rank; on each side the companions of the royal table, his relations and friends, the state officials, and the chief priests and eunuchs.

The walls and ceilings of the whole hall were covered with glittering plates of gold, and the floor with purple carpets. Winged bulls with human heads stood as sentinels before the silver doors of the hall, and in the court of the palace the bodyguards, their lances ornamented with gold and silver apples, were drawn up. They wore golden breast-plates over their purple coats, short swords in golden sheaths glittering with jewels, and high Persian caps. The Immortals² were distinguished by their stately appearance and bold bearing.

Officials with short ivory staves in their hands, whose duty it was to announce and introduce strangers, led the ambassadors into the hall and past the throne. When they reached the steps, they prostrated themselves as though about to kiss the earth, and hid their arms in their sleeves. Before they answered any question of the king's, a cloth was tied round the lower part of the face so that their impure breath might not touch his pure person.

Cambyzes addressed the chief ambassadors graciously or severely, according to the degree of satisfaction aroused by the gifts of the provinces they represented and their obe-

¹ The *Feruer*, or *Ferwer*, is the spiritual part of man—his soul combined with the power of judgment. It existed before birth, unites with us when we enter the world, and leaves us when we die. It fights the evil spirits. As soon as it leaves us the body decomposes. It carries prayers to God, and is therefore represented as a winged disk.

² The Immortals owed their name to the circumstance that as soon as one of their number died or fell in battle a substitute was at once accepted, so that the guard always numbered 10,000 warriors. Herod., vii. 40, 41, 84; Xenoph., *Cyrop.*, vii. 1, viii. 1, 2, 3.

dience. When the embassy of the Jews approached his throne, at the end of the procession, he graciously stopped the Hebrews, who were led by two grave men with sharply cut features.

The first of them was clad in the dress of the noblest and wealthiest Babylonians, the other wore a purple garment woven in one piece and ornamented with bells and tassels; it was kept together by a blue, white, and red girdle, and a blue ephod. A little bag with the Urim and Thummim hung from his neck, and was adorned with twelve jewels set in gold, and bearing the names of the tribes of Israel. A white fillet, the ends of which fell below his shoulders, was wound round the grave brow of the high priest.

"I am glad to see you again, Belshazzar," cried the king, to the man in Babylonian dress. "Since my father's death, you have not entered my gates."

The man to whom he spoke, bowed humbly, and answered: "The grace of my lord makes your slave happy. If, in spite of his unworthiness, you let the sun of your favour shine on your servant, grant the great wish of my poor nation, which your great father allowed to return to the land of its fathers. This old man at my side, Joshua, the high priest of our God, did not fear to undertake the journey to Babylon in order to ask it of you. May his speech be pleasant to your ears, and his words find a fertile spot in your heart."

"I can guess what you would ask," cried Cambyses. "Am I right, priest, if I think that your request once more concerns the building of the temple in your home?"

"Nothing can remain hidden from my lord," answered the priest, bowing low. "Your slaves at Jerusalem yearn to look on the face of their ruler, and entreat you, through me, to visit the land of their fathers, and to permit them to continue the building of the temple which your gracious father, may God be merciful to him, allowed."

The king smiled and said: "You know how to put your request with the cunning of your race, and you have chosen the right moment and the right word. On my birthday I can scarcely refuse the request of a faithful people. I promise them to visit as soon as possible the good town of Jerusalem and the land of your fathers."

"You will gladden your servants," answered the priest. "Our olive trees and vines will bring forth more beautiful fruit at your approach. Our gates shall be made wide to receive you, and Israel will greet its ruler with rejoicings, and be doubly happy if it salutes him as the new architect——"

"Stop, stop, priest!" cried Cambyzes. "Your first wish shall be fulfilled, as I said, for I have long cherished the desire to become acquainted with wealthy Tyre, golden Sidon, and your Jerusalem with its wonderful superstitions; but if I were to permit you to continue building your temple, what would remain for me to grant you next year?"

"Your servants will welcome their lord with gifts, not with entreaties," answered the priest. "But now speak the word, and permit us to build a house for the God of our fathers."

"Strange people, these Israelites," cried Cambyzes. "I hear that you believe in one God, who cannot be represented by an image, who is merely a spirit. Do you think this unsubstantial being desires a house. Truly your great spirit must be weak and pitiable if he needs shelter from the wind and rain, protection from the heat which he himself created. If your deity is omnipresent, like ours, fall down before him and pray to him everywhere as we do, and you may be certain that you will be heard everywhere."

"The God of Israel hears his people everywhere," answered the high priest. "He heard us when, captives of the Pharaoh, we languished far from home. He heard us when we wept by Babel's stream. He chose your father as the instrument of our freedom, and will hear my prayer to-day and soften your heart. Great king, grant your servants a common place of sacrifice for the twelve scattered tribes of their people, an altar on whose steps they may pray together for you and your house, and in which they may celebrate their festivals. If you grant this favour, we will not cease to call down the grace of God on your head and his curses on your enemies."

"Permit my brethren to build their temple," entreated Belshazzar, the richest and most respected of the Jews who had remained in Babylon, a man whom Cyrus had

treated with great respect, and whom he had repeatedly consulted.

"Will you keep the peace if I grant your wish?" asked the king. "My father allowed you to begin the work and supplied you with means to complete it. United and happy, you returned home from Babylon, but the building of the temple gave rise to disputes and quarrels. The most respected Syrians entreated Cyrus in numerous petitions to forbid the completion of the temple, and only a short time ago your countrymen, the Samaritans, begged me to interrupt the work. Pray, then, to your God where and how you like, but I cannot allow you to continue an undertaking which causes quarrels and disunion among you."

"Would you on this day refuse a favour which your father granted in a document?" asked Belshazzar.

"A document?"

"It must still be preserved in the archives of your realm."

"As soon as you find it," returned the king, "I will not only consent to the building, but will even assist you. My father's will is as holy as a command of the gods, in my eyes."

"Will you allow us with the aid of your scribes to search the archives at Ecbatana, for that is where the document must be?"

"I consent, but fear you will find nothing. Priest, tell your countrymen I am satisfied with the equipment of the warriors they have sent to Persia to fight against the Massagetæ. My general, Megabyzus, praises their bearing and appearance. May they prove as brave as they were in my father's wars. Belshazzar, I invite you to my wedding with the Egyptian. Tell your countrymen, Meshach and Abednego,¹ the first men in Babylon after you, that I expect them at my table to-night."

"The God of Israel grant you happiness and blessing!" said Belshazzar, bowing low.

"I accept your wish," cried the king; "for I do not consider your great spirit, who is said to have performed wonderful miracles, devoid of power. Another thing, Belshazzar: several Jews the other day mocked at the gods of the

¹ We have chosen these names mentioned by Daniel because we were unable to find any better suited for Jews of rank in Babylon.

Babylonians, and were punished for it. Warn your countrymen. They make themselves hated by their superstitions, and the arrogance with which they venture to declare that your great spirit is the only true God. Take example by us, for we are satisfied with what we have, and do not interfere with the possessions of others. Do not think yourselves better than the rest of the world. I wish you well, for your pride pleases me; but beware lest it turn to vainglory and prove your destruction."

The Jews withdrew disappointed, but not without hope, for Belshazzar was quite positive that the document relating to the building of the temple must be in the archives at Ecbatana.

The Jews were followed by the embassies of the Syrians and the Ionic Greeks. The last in the procession were wild-looking men of strange mien, dressed in the skins of animals. Their belts, shoulder-straps, axes and lances, were roughly wrought of solid gold, and on their high fur caps they wore gold ornaments. In front of them went a man in Persian dress, whose face showed that he belonged to the same race as the others.

The king looked with astonishment at the approaching embassy. His face darkened; he signed to the introducer of strangers, and cried: "What do these people want of me? If I am not mistaken, they belong to those Massagetæ who will soon have cause to tremble at my vengeance. Tell them, Gobryas, that a well-equipped army stands in the Median plains, prepared to give them an answer with the sword to their demands."

The official bowed, and said: "These people entered Babylon this morning during the sacrifice with great loads of the purest gold, with which to purchase your goodwill. When they heard that a great feast was being held in your honour, they urged me to obtain for them the favour of appearing before your face this very day, and of informing you with what messages their countrymen have sent them to your gates."

The king's clouded brow cleared. He looked keenly at the tall, bearded figures of the Massagetæ, and cried: "Let them approach! I am curious to know what proposals my father's murderers will dare to make to me."

Gobryas made a sign to the tallest and oldest of the Massagetæ, who, accompanied by the man in Persian dress, approached the throne and began to speak in his native tongue in a loud voice. His companion, one of Cyrus' Massagetean prisoners of war, who had learned Persian, translated to the king, sentence by sentence, the address of the spokesman of the nomads.

"We know," he began, "that you, great sovereign, are angry with the Massagetæ because your father fell in a war against our power which he himself had caused, though we had never offended him."

"My father was perfectly justified in punishing you," the king interrupted, "for your queen, Tomyris, dared to refuse him when he sought her hand."

"Be not angry, O king," returned the Massagete; "but I cannot conceal from you that our whole nation approved of her refusal. Even a child could see that aged Cyrus wished to add our queen to the number of his wives, because his insatiable craving for land made him hope that he would gain our land as well as our queen."

Cambyses remained silent, but the ambassador continued: "Cyrus had a bridge built over the river Araxes, our boundary. We feared nothing, for Tomyris sent him word that he might save himself the trouble of building bridges, for we would receive him in our territory, and let him cross the Araxes unmolested, or we would meet him in his own land."

"Cyrus determined, so prisoners of war afterwards told us, in accordance with the advice of Cræsus, the dethroned King of Lydia, to seek us in our own territory and destroy us by stratagem. He sent but a small portion of his army against us, allowed us to destroy it by means of our arrows and lances, and let us seize his camp without a blow. We thought we had conquered the invincible man, and feasted on your rich stores. We were poisoned by the sweet drink you call wine, which we had never tasted before, and fell into a sleep which resembled a stupor. Your army attacked us and slaughtered a number of our warriors. You took many prisoners, among them heroic Spargapis, our queen's young son."

"When he heard that his mother was ready to make

peace, if you would set him free, the noble hero begged that his chains might be removed. This was done. When he was again able to use his hands, he seized a sword and pierced his breast, with the cry: 'I sacrifice myself for my people!'

"We had scarcely received the news of the noble death of the beloved youth when we assembled all the forces spared by swords and chains. Even boys and old men armed themselves and marched against your father to avenge Spargapises, and sacrifice themselves for the freedom of the Massagetæ as he had done. We met; you were defeated; Cyrus fell. Tomyris found his body in a pool of blood, and cried: 'Insatiable man! Now, I think, you are sated with blood.' The host of nobles whom you call Immortals drove us back and carried off your father's body from our midst. You yourself stood at their head and fought like a lion. I recognize you. Know that this sword by my side inflicted the wound which adorns your manly face like a purple badge of honour."

A thrill passed through the listeners, who trembled for the life of the bold speaker. Cambyses, instead of being angry, nodded approvingly, and said: "I too recognize you. On that day you rode a fiery red horse covered with gold ornaments. We Persians know how to honour courage; you too shall experience this. My friends, I never saw a sharper sword, a more indefatigable arm, than that of this man. Bow before him, for heroism deserves the respect of the brave, whether it be found in friend or foe. Massagete, I advise you to return home soon and arm yourself, for the memory of your courage and strength increases my desire to fight with you. By Mithra, strong foes like you are better than weak friends. I will let you return home safely; but do not remain too long near me, else the thought of the vengeance I owe my father's soul may awaken my wrath, and your life will approach its end."

A bitter smile played round the bearded mouth of the warrior, as he answered the king: "We Massagetæ think the soul of your father has been too terribly avenged. The only son of our queen, the pride of our people, who was not inferior to Cyrus, nor less noble, died for him. The blood

of fifty thousand of my countrymen, sacrifices to the dead, soaked the shores of the Araxes, while only thirty thousand of your men fell. We fought as bravely as you, but your armour is stronger, and resists the arrows which pierce our furs. To conclude, most cruel vengeance of all, you killed our noble queen, Tomyris."

"Tomyris dead!" cried Cambyses, interrupting the speaker. "We Persians are said to have killed a woman! What happened to your queen? Answer me?"

"Tomyris died, ten months ago, of grief for the death of her only son. I may therefore say that she too fell a sacrifice to the war with Persia and to your father's soul."

"She was a great woman," murmured Cambyses. Then, raising his voice, he continued: "Truly, Massagetæ, I begin to think the gods themselves have undertaken to avenge my father on you. But great as your loss may appear, Spargapises, Tomyris, and fifty thousand Massagetæ do not equal the soul of a king of Persia, much less of Cyrus."

"In our country," returned the ambassador, "all are equal in death, and the soul of a dead king is not more important than that of a poor servant. Your father was a great man, but what we suffered for his sake is monstrous. Know, O king, that I have not told you all the misfortunes which came upon our land after that dreadful war. After Tomyris' death, dissensions broke out among us. Two men thought they had equal rights to the throne. Half the people fought for one, half for the other. A dreadful civil war, followed by a devastating pestilence, thinned the ranks of our warriors. If you make war on us we cannot resist you, and we therefore offer you peace and heavy loads of gold."

"Then you will submit without a blow?" cried Cambyses. "The size of my army assembled in the Median plain will show you that I expected greater things of your heroes. We cannot fight without foes. I will dismiss my warriors and send you a governor. I welcome you among the subjects of my realm."

At the king's words the hero coloured over face and brow with burning red, and answered in an agitated voice:—

"You are mistaken, O king, if you think we have forgotten our former courage, or are anxious to become slaves. But we know your power, and know that the small number of our people whom war and pestilence have spared cannot resist your countless hosts. Honestly and frankly we confess this; but at the same time we declare that we will continue to govern ourselves and never submit to receive laws and commands from a Persian satrap. You look at me in wrath, but I can bear your glance, and repeat what I have said."

"And I," cried Cambyses, "give you this answer. You must choose one of two things. Either you submit to my sceptre, join the Persian empire under the name of the Masagetean province, and receive a satrap as my representative with all due respect, or you will consider yourselves my enemies, and my army will force you to accept the conditions I now offer you in kindness. To-day you may still gain a master who wishes you well; to-morrow you will have to fear me as conqueror and avenger. Reflect well before you decide."

"We have considered everything beforehand," answered the warrior, "and have seen that we, the free sons of the steppes, would far rather die than be slaves. Hear what the council of our elders tells you through me. We Masagetæ have become too weak to resist you Persians, through no fault of our own, but through the great visitation of our god, the sun. We know you have prepared a great army against us, and we are ready to purchase freedom and liberty by an annual payment of gold. But if in spite of this you try to conquer us by force of arms, you yourselves will be the greatest sufferers. As soon as an army approaches the Araxeres, we, our women and children, will all depart and seek another home, for we do not dwell in fortified towns and houses as you do, but are used to wander about on our horses and live in tents. We will take our gold with us, and fill up and destroy the hidden mines, where you might find new treasures. We know all the places where the precious metals lie, and are ready to give them to you in great quantities if you grant us liberty; but if you wage war on us, you will find nothing but an uninhabited desert, and an inaccessible foe who may prove

terrible to you as soon as he has recovered from the heavy losses which thinned his ranks. Grant us peace and freedom, and we are prepared to send you every year gold and five thousand swift horses of the steppes, and, whenever serious danger threatens the Persian realm, we will assist you."

The ambassador ceased. Cambyzes looked down thoughtfully, hesitated long before he answered, and at last, rising from his throne, said: "We will take council at the banquet to-day, and tell you to-morrow what answer to take to your people. Gobryas, see that these men are well treated, and to him who wounded my face, send a portion of the best food from my own table."

CHAPTER XV.

A LETTER FROM EGYPT.

MEANWHILE Nitetis sat in her house in the hanging gardens, alone, and lost in grief. To-day, for the first time, she had taken part in the sacrifice which was attended by all the wives of the king; she had knelt in the open air before the fire altar, and, while strange hymns were chanted around her, she tried to pray to her new gods.

Most of the inmates of the royal harem saw the Egyptian for the first time at this ceremony, and, instead of raising their eyes to their deity, kept them fixed on her. The inquisitive, ill-natured glances of her rivals disturbed her; the loud music which sounded from the town distracted her. She was moved with sorrow when she thought of the reverent prayers she had uttered by the side of her mother and sister to the gods of her childhood, in the solemn, oppressive silence of the huge temples at home; and, in spite of her desire to pray to the gods that they might bestow happiness and prosperity on the beloved king, she was unable to attain to a truly devout state of mind.

Cassandane and Atossa knelt by her side and joined with all their hearts in the hymns of the magi, which were merely empty words to the Egyptian's heart.

It cannot be denied that these prayers contain many very poetic passages, but they are rendered tedious by the constant repetitions of the names of a number of good and evil spirits who are incessantly invoked. They awakened deep piety in the hearts of the Persian women, for from their childhood they had learned to look on them as the holiest and noblest of songs. These hymns had accom-

panied their first prayers, and they were precious in their eyes, like everything that we inherit from our ancestors, and that we learn to look at in our childhood, the most impressionable time of our life, as venerable and divine. But they could make but little impression on the mind of the Egyptian, who had been accustomed to the most beautiful Greek poetry. That which she had acquired with so much trouble had not yet become a part of her inmost being, and while the Persians performed the outward ceremonies of the service as a perfect matter of course, she was obliged to exert herself in order not to forget the prescribed forms and expose herself before her rivals, who watched her with jealous eyes. A few minutes before the sacrifice she had received the first letter from Egypt. It lay unopened on her dressing-table, and she thought of it whenever she prepared to pray. What news did it contain? How were her parents? Had Tachot resigned herself to the parting with her and the beloved prince?

When the ceremony was ended she embraced Cassandane and Atossa with a deep sigh, as though released from a threatening danger. Then she was carried to her dwelling, and, as soon as she had arrived, she hastened eagerly to the table on which lay the precious letter. Her chief attendant, the same who on her journey had dressed her for the first time in Persian robes, received her with a sly and significant smile, which changed to wonder when her mistress did not deign to glance at the ornaments which lay on the table but seized the longed-for letter.

Nitetis hastily broke the seal, and was about to sit down to begin the troublesome work of reading, when the servant approached her, clasping her hands, and cried: "By Mithra, mistress, you must be ill, or is there, perhaps, a charm in that piece of grey stuff which makes him who looks on it blind to all that is beautiful? Put it aside quickly. Look at the lovely things the great king, Auramazda grant him victory, sent you while you were at divine service. Look at this costly purple garment with white stripes, and the rich silver embroidery. See this tiara, with the royal diamonds. Do you not know that these gifts are more than a common present? Cambyses

begs—begs, the messenger said, not commands—that you will wear these splendid garments at the banquet to-night. How angry Phædime will be! How the other women will stare! They never received such presents! Till to-day Cassandane, the king's mother, was the only woman at court who was allowed to wear purple and diamonds. By these presents Cambyses makes you his great mother's equal, and before the eyes of the whole world announces that you are his favourite wife and queen. Please, please let me deck you in this new splendour. How lovely you will look; how jealous, how angry the others will be! I wish I could be present when you enter the room. Come, mistress, let me take off your simple robe and dress you, as beseems our new queen."

Nitētis had listened in silence to the chatterbox, and looked at the costly gifts with a smile. She was woman enough to be pleased with them. Were they not sent by the man whom she loved better than life? Did not these gifts prove that she was more to the king than all his other wives, that Cambyses loved her? The letter she had longed for, fell unread from her hands. She silently yielded to her maid's wish, and in a short time stood in full splendour. The royal purple increased her majestic beauty, and the high glittering tiara seemed to add to the stature of her beautiful, slender figure. When the metal mirror on the table showed her, for the first time, the noble figure of a queen in her state robes, a new expression came over her face. It was as though some of her lord's pride was reflected there. The light-hearted maid involuntarily sank on her knees when the bright glance of the woman who was loved by the mightiest of kings met her approving look. Nitētis gazed for a short time at the girl who knelt in the dust before her, then, blushing with shame, she shook her beautiful head, bent down, lifted her up kindly, gave her a gold bracelet, and kissed her brow. Then her eyes fell on the letter on the ground, and she bade her leave her. Mandane almost ran from her mistress's room to show the splendid present to her subordinates. Nitētis threw herself into the ivory armchair beside the table, while her heart and eyes overflowed with bliss. She

uttered a short prayer to her favourite Egyptian goddess, Hathor, kissed the golden chain which Cambyzes had given her when he sprang into the water, pressed her lips on the letter from home, unrolled it slowly, almost overcome by her deep happiness, while she sank back into the purple cushions and murmured :

"How happy I am. Poor letter, she who wrote you little thought that Nitetis would leave you on the floor unread for a quarter of an hour."

She began to read full of joy, but soon her smiles gave way to a grave expression, and when she had ended the letter, she again let it fall to the ground. The eyes, whose haughty glance had forced her servant to fall down before her, were filled with tears. Her proud head lay on the jewels which covered the table, tears fell on the pearls and diamonds, as strange a contrast as the proud tiara and its crushed wearer.

The letter ran as follows :

"Ladice, wife of Amasis, Queen of Upper and Lower Egypt, to her daughter Nitetis, wife of the great King of Persia.—It is not our fault, dear daughter, that you have been so long without news from home. The trireme which was to carry the letters intended for you to Sidon was stopped by Samian ships, which ought to be called pirate ships, and was taken to the harbour of Astypalaia.¹

"The insolence of Polycrates, who seems to succeed in all he undertakes, increases more and more. No vessel is safe from his pirates, since he defeated the Lesbians and Milesians, who tried to oppose this lawless state of affairs. The sons of Pisistratus are his friends ; Lygdamis is bound to him, and needs Samian help to preserve his power over Naxos. He has won over the Greek Amphictyons by giving the neighbouring island of Rhenia to Apollo of Delos. All seafaring nations suffer great damage from his fifty-oared boats, which bear crews of twenty thousand men ; but no one dares attack him, for he is surrounded by splendidly trained bodyguards, and has made his citadel and the excellent moles of the harbour of Samos almost impregnable.

¹ The fortified citadel of Polycrates in Samos.

"The merchants who followed Colæus¹ to the west, and those pirate ships which show no mercy, will make Samos the richest of islands and Polycrates the mightiest of men, unless, as your father says, the gods, envious of the perfect happiness of a mortal, prepare a sudden downfall for him.

"Amasis, who feared this, advised his old friend, Polycrates, to conciliate the envious gods, by depriving himself of his dearest treasure in such a way that it could never return to him. Polycrates followed your father's advice, and threw the most valuable seal ring which he possessed from the top of the round tower of his citadel into the sea. It was the work of Theodorus, a sardonyx of great size, held by two dolphins, on which a lyre, the crest of the despot, was engraved with wonderful skill.

"Six days later his cooks found the ring in the mouth of a fish. Polycrates at once sent us news of this wonderful incident. Your father shook his grey head sorrowfully, instead of rejoicing, and said, he saw that no one could escape his fate. The same day he renounced his old friend, Polycrates, and sent him word that he would try to forget him, in order to avoid the grief he would feel at seeing a man he loved meet with misfortune.

"Polycrates received the message with laughter, and sent back the letters which his pirate ships had taken from our trireme, with a scornful greeting. Henceforth we shall send your letters by way of Syria.

"You may wonder why I tell you this long story, which will interest you less than other news from home. It is to prepare you for your father's condition. Do you recognize the gay, cheerful, careless Amasis in the gloomy message he sent his Samian friend?

"Alas, my husband has cause enough for sorrow, and your mother's eyes have been wet with tears since your departure from Egypt. From your sister's sick bed, I hasten to your father to comfort him and guide his steps. I make use of the night to write these lines, though I need sleep.

¹ A Samian sea captain who was driven from his course during a voyage to Egypt, and was the first Greek to pass through the Pillars of Hercules.

"Here I was interrupted by the nurses, who summoned me to Tachot, your sister, your faithful friend.

"I cannot tell you how often the dear girl uttered your name in her delirium, how carefully she guards the wax portrait of you, which is such a wonderful likeness, and proves the height to which Greek art has attained and the skill of great Theodorus. To-morrow we shall send to Ægina, so that a copy may be made in gold. The fragile wax suffers from contact with the hot lips and hands of your sister.

"Now, my daughter, summon all your fortitude, and I will summon all my strength to tell you in proper order what the gods have decreed to our house.

"Tachot did not cease to weep for three days after your departure. All our comforting words, all your father's exhortations, all sacrifices and prayers, were unavailing to soften or lessen the poor child's grief. Her tears ceased at last on the fourth day. Apparently resigned, she answered us in a low voice when we questioned her. The greater part of the day she sat silent at her spindle. The usually skilful fingers broke the threads, or lay idle for hours in the dreamer's lap. She, who formerly laughed so heartily at your father's jokes now listened to them with apathy. When I admonished her as a mother, she listened in anxious excitement.

"When I kissed her brow and begged her to control herself, she sprang up, blushing deeply, threw herself on my breast, sat down again at her spindle, and drew the thread with almost feverish haste. After half an hour, her hands again lay idle in her lap; her eyes were dreamily gazing before her or on the ground. If we forced her to take part in a festival, she moved apathetically among the guests.

"When we took her with us on the great pilgrimage to Bubastis, where the Egyptians forget their gravity and dignity, and the Nile and its shores resemble a great stage where intoxicated men perform plays that lead to the wildest extravagances; when, for the first time in her life, she saw at Bubastis a whole nation yielding to uncontrolled joy and wild mirth, she woke from her silent brooding and began to weep as on the first day of your departure.

"Sad, almost despairing, we took the poor child back to Sais.

"She looked like a goddess. She was thinner, but we thought taller. Her complexion was of an almost transparent white, with a slight red tinge which I can only liken to the colour of a young rose leaf or the early red of dawn. Her eyes are still wonderfully beautiful and bright. It seems to me as though she saw what happens in heaven and on earth. I think she sees into other worlds.

"As the temperature of her hands and brow increased, and a slight shiver sometimes passed over her delicate frame, we summoned Imhotep, the best physician, from Thebes to Sais. The experienced man shook his head when he saw your sister, and prophesied that she was on the brink of a serious illness. She was no longer allowed to spin, and was forbidden to speak much. She was obliged to take all manner of draughts, her sufferings were exorcised, the stars and oracles were questioned, great sacrifices and gifts were offered to the gods. 'The priest of Hathor, from the island of Philæ, sent us a sacred amulet for the patient; the priest of Osiris at Abydos sent a lock of Osiris' hair set in gold; and Neithotep, the chief priest of our patron goddess, arranged a great sacrifice which was to restore your sister's health.

"Neither physicians, exorcisms, nor amulets were of any avail. Neithotep at last did not conceal from me that Tachot's stars gave little hope. The sacred bull of Memphis died during these days, the priests found no heart in his entrails, and announced misfortune to Egypt. No new Apis has yet appeared. It is thought that the gods are angry with your father's realm, and the oracle of Buto declared that the immortals will not again bless Egypt with their favour, till all the temples erected on the black earth¹ are destroyed and all who sacrificed to the false gods banished from Egypt.

"The evil omens spoke the truth. Tachot was attacked by a raging fever. During nine days she hovered between life and death, and she is still so weak that she has to be carried about, and cannot move hand or foot.

"During the celebration of the feast of Bubastis, Amasis'

¹ Egypt, which was called Cham, the black or black-earthed land, by its ancient inhabitants.

eyes became inflamed, as is often the case in Egypt.¹ Instead of resting them, he still worked as usual from sunrise till noon. During the worst days of your sister's illness he would not leave her bedside in spite of our warnings. Let me be brief, my daughter. The disease became worse and worse, and on the day that we heard of your safe arrival in Babylon, Amasis became blind.

"The strong, joyous man has become sick, gloomy, and old since that day, for the death of the Apis, the unlucky constellations and oracles, frightened him. The night in which he lives has dulled his cheerfulness. The consciousness that he cannot do without assistance deprives him of his firm will, and he who was once so bold and independent, is about to become a tool of the priests.

"He spends hours in the temple of Neith in order to pray and sacrifice. He is employing a number of workmen to build a dwelling for his own mummy, and an equal number of workmen have begun to level to the ground the sanctuary of Apollo, begun by the Greeks at Memphis. He calls his and Tachot's misfortunes a just punishment inflicted by the immortal gods.

"His visits to the patient's bedside bring her little comfort, for, instead of kindly encouraging her, he strives to prove to her, that she too has deserved the punishment of the gods. With all the strength of his eloquence he tries to make the poor child forget earth altogether, and by constant prayers and sacrifices to obtain the grace of Osiris and the judges of the Nether World. Thus he tortures the soul of our dear invalid, who would gladly live. Perhaps my nature has retained more of its Greek character than befits the Queen of Egypt; but death is so long, life so short, that I call those sages unwise who by constantly thinking about death give him power over half their lives.

"I have again been interrupted. Imhotep, the great physician, came to see our patient. He gives little hope; he even seems surprised that her frail body has so long resisted the sharp assault of death. She would have died long ago, he said yesterday, if she were not supported by

¹ Egyptian ophthalmia must have raged at an early period on the Nile. Egyptian oculists were famous at the time of our story.

her firm determination to live, and by a ceaseless longing. If she wished to die, she could die as we pass from dreams to sleep. If her longing were satisfied, she might live for years; but it is not very probable. If her hope remains unanswered for a short time longer, she will be destroyed and killed by the very longing, which now prevents her from dying. Can you guess what she yearns for? Our Tachot was bewitched by your husband's brother. I do not mean to say—what Ameneman, the priest, believes—that the youth made use of charms to inspire her with love, for less beauty and grace than Bartja possesses would suffice to gain the heart of an innocent girl, almost a child still. But her passion is so strong, the change in her character so great, that I myself sometimes believe in supernatural influences. Shortly before your departure I saw that your sister was attracted towards the Persian. We thought that her first tears must be ascribed to your departure; but when she became silent and dreamy, Ibycus, who was staying at our court, noticed that the maiden was possessed by a strong passion.

“Once when she sat dreaming at the spindle, he, in my presence, whispered Sappho's love song in her ear:

‘Dear mother, in good sooth
I cannot weave, too much I love the youth,
Through slender Aphrodite's wiles.’¹

“She turned pale at the words, and asked: ‘Did you write those words, Ibycus?’

“‘No,’ he returned; ‘Sappho, the Lesbian, sang them fifty years ago.’

“‘Fifty years ago,’ repeated Tachot, thoughtfully.

“‘Love is always the same,’ interrupted the poet. ‘As Sappho loved fifty years ago, the world loved ages past, and will love centuries hence.’

“The sick girl smiled assent; and from that time, when she sat idle at the spindle, she often hummed the song in a low voice.

“In spite of this, we carefully avoided every question which would have reminded her of the man she loved. When she was seized by the paroxysms of fever, her hot

¹ “Sappho,” ed. Neue, xxxii.

lips never wearied of repeating Bartja's name. When she was conscious again, we told her of her delirious words.

"Then she opened her heart to me, and said in solemn tones, looking towards heaven like a prophetess: 'I know I shall not die till I have seen him again.'

"The other day she was carried to the temple, because she longed to pray in the sacred halls. When the service was over, and we passed some children playing in the court, she noticed a little girl eagerly telling her friends something. She commanded her bearers to put down the litter, and summoned the child.

" 'What were you saying?' she asked the child.

" 'I was telling the others about my eldest sister.'

" 'May I hear it?' asked Tachot, so kindly that the child began without shyness: 'Batau, my sister's betrothed, returned yesterday, unexpectedly, from Thebes. When the star of Isis rose, he suddenly came on to our roof, where Kerimama was playing draughts with my father. He brought her a beautiful golden bridal wreath.' Tachot kissed the child, and gave her her costly fan. When we reached home, she smiled at me roguishly, and said: 'You know, dearest mother, that the words of children in the forecourt of the temple are looked on as oracles. If the child did not lie, he must come. Did you not hear that he will bring the bridal wreath? Oh, mother, I know—I know I shall see him again.'

"When, yesterday, I asked Tachot if she had a message for you, she bade me tell you that she sent you many greetings and kisses, and thought of writing to you herself when she was stronger, as she had much to confide to you. She has just brought me the letter I have enclosed, which is for you alone, and which she wrote with great difficulty.

"Now I must hasten to end my letter, as the messenger has been waiting for a long while.

"I should like to tell you something pleasant, but wherever I turn my eyes I see nothing but sadness. Your brother submits more and more to the priests; and, guided by Neithotep, carries on the affairs of the state, for your poor blind father, Amasis, leaves Psantik perfect liberty, and says it matters little to him whether the prince takes his place a little sooner or later.

"He did not prevent your brother from removing by force the children of Phanes, the former commander of the bodyguard, from the house of the Greek Rhodopis. He even allowed his son to enter into negotiations with the descendants of the two hundred thousand warriors who emigrated to Ethiopia on account of the favour shown by Psamtik I. to the Greek mercenaries, so that the latter might be dismissed if the Ethiopians consented to return. The negotiations were not successful; but Psamtik has grossly insulted the Greeks by treating Phanes' children unworthily. Aristomachus threatened to leave Egypt with ten thousand of the best mercenaries. He demanded his discharge, when Phanes' son was murdered by your brother's orders. Suddenly the Spartan vanished, no one knows whither. The Greeks were bribed by large sums of money to remain in Egypt.

"Amasis allowed all this to take place in silence, and spent his time in sacrifice and prayer. He looked on calmly while his son insulted all classes, or sought to win them over in an unworthy manner. The Greek and Egyptian commanders and nomarchs from different provinces all assure me that this state of things is unbearable. No one knows what to expect from the new ruler, who commands to-day what yesterday he passionately refused, who threatens to destroy the beautiful bond that till now bound the Egyptians to their king.

"Farewell, my daughter! Think of your poor friend, of your mother. Pardon your parents, if you should learn what we have so long concealed from you. Pray for Tachot. Greet Croesus and our young Persian friends. Give Bartja your sister's greetings. I must ask him to look on them as the message of a dying girl. Could you not send your sister a token that the young Persian has not quite forgotten her?

"Farewell! May you be happy in your prosperous new home."

CHAPTER XVI.

BOGES' PLOT.

THE golden dawn brings rainy days, and joyous anticipation is often a harbinger of sad events.

Nitetis had looked forward with joy to this letter, which was destined to pour such bitterness on her sweet bliss. It had destroyed, as though by enchantment, a beautiful part of her existence, the happy recollection of the sharers of the pure joys of her childhood. As she sat weeping in her purple robes, she thought of nothing but her mother's sorrow, her father's suffering, her sister's illness. The joyous future which smiled on her, and showed her happiness, love and power, faded from her sight. The privileged bride of Cambyzes forgot the lover who awaited her; the future Queen of Persia felt bitter grief for the misfortunes of the royal family of Egypt.

The sun had long reached its noonday height when her maid, Mandane, entered the room again to put the last touches to her mistress's dress.

"She is sleeping," thought the girl. "I will let her rest for half an hour. The sacrifice has tired her, and she must appear at the feast in all her freshness and beauty, and outshine the others as the moon does the stars."

Unheard by her mistress, she crept from the room, the windows of which offered a splendid view of the hanging gardens, the great town, the river, and the luxuriant plain of Babylon, and went into the garden.

Without looking round she ran to a flower-bed to pick some roses. Her eyes were fixed on the new bracelet, for the rays of the afternoon sun were reflected in its splendid jewels, and she did not notice a richly dressed man who

was peering with outstretched neck through a window into the room where Nitetis wept.

The eavesdropper turned to the girl as soon as he became aware of her presence, and said in a shrill boyish voice: "Welcome, fair Mandane."

The maid was startled, and when she recognized the chief eunuch Boges, she said: "It is not right of you to frighten a poor girl. By Mithra, I should have fainted if I had seen you before I heard you. Women's voices do not surprise me, but a man is as rare in this lonely spot as a swan in the desert."

Boges smiled graciously, though he understood the malicious allusion to his voice, and rubbing his hands said: "Certainly, it is hard for a beautiful young pigeon to be obliged to pine away in this lonely nest; but be patient, my sweet one. Soon your mistress will be queen, and will seek a handsome young husband for you, with whom I do not doubt you would rather dwell alone than with the beautiful Egyptian."

"My mistress is lovelier than many like to acknowledge, and I have commissioned no one to find me a husband," she returned, pertly. "I shall find him without your help."

"Who could doubt it? Such a pretty face attracts men as a worm does fish."

"I am not angling for men, least of all for such men as you."

"I believe you, I believe you," said the eunuch, laughing. "But tell me, my treasure, why are you so hard on me? Have I offended you? Was it not I who obtained for you this high post? Am I not your countryman, a Mede?"

"And are we not both human beings, and have we not both ten fingers on our hands, and have we not both noses in the middle of our faces? Half the people in the town are Medes, and if they were all my friends because they are my countrymen, I might be queen to-morrow. You did not obtain my post for me; I owe it to the chief priest, Oropastes, who recommended me to Cas-sandane, not to you. We have nothing to do with you here."

"What are you talking of, my darling? Do you not

know that no servant can be appointed without my consent?"

"I know that as well as you, but——"

"But you women are an ungrateful sex, and do not deserve our kindness."

"Do not forget that you are speaking to a girl of good birth."

"I know, my lamb, your father was a magus, your mother the daughter of a magus. Both died young and left you to the care of Ixabates, the father of the chief priest, Oropastes, who let you grow up with his children. When you received earrings, the brother of Oropastes, Gaumata,¹—well, you need not blush—Gaumata is a very pretty name—fell in love with your fair face and, though he was not nineteen years old, wanted to marry you. Gaumata and Mandane—how well it sounds! Gaumata and Mandane. If I were a poet my hero should be called Gaumata, and his love, Mandane."

"I forbid you to jest like this!" cried the girl, blushing deeply, and stamping her foot.

"Are you angry because I think your names sound well together? Be angry with proud Oropastes, who sent his young brother to Rhagæ and you to the court, so that you might forget each other."

"You are maligning my benefactor."

"May my tongue wither if I am not speaking the truth. Oropastes parted you and his brother, because he had higher views for handsome Gaumata than a marriage with the poor orphan of an insignificant magus. Amytis or Menische would suit him better as sisters-in-law than a poor girl like you, who owes all to his charity, and can but frustrate his ambitious plans. Between ourselves, he would like to govern the land during the war with the Massagetæ, and would give much if he could in some way become connected with the Achæmenidæ. When a man grows old he does not think of new wives; but his brother is young and handsome; he is even said to resemble Prince Bartja."

"That is true!" cried the maid. "Just fancy, when we went to meet my mistress, I saw Bartja for the first time

¹ Called Smerdis by the Greeks. The cuneiform inscriptions call him Sismata, or, according to Spiegel, Gaumâta.

in the court of the station-house, I took him for Gaumata. They are as like as twins, and the two handsomest men in the kingdom."

"How you blush, my rose. But the likeness is not quite deceptive. When this morning I greeted the chief priest's brother——"

"Gaumata is here!" interrupted the girl, with passionate haste. "Have you really seen him, or do you wish to draw me out and make fun of me?"

"By Mithra, my pigeon, I kissed his brow to-day, and had to tell him much of his sweetheart. I will do impossible things for him, for I am too weak to resist those lovely blue eyes, those golden curls and peach cheeks. Do not blush; reserve your blushes, my pomegranate blossom, till I have told you all. In future you will not treat poor Boges so cruelly, and will learn to see that he has a good heart full of friendship for his beautiful, pert, little countrywoman."

"I do not trust you," interrupted the girl. "I have been warned to beware of your smooth tongue, and I do not know how I have earned your interest."

"Do you recognise this?" asked Boges, showing the girl a white ribbon covered with skilfully embroidered golden flames.

"The last present I worked for him!" cried Mandane.

"The token for which I asked Gaumata. I knew you would not trust me. Who ever found that the prisoner loved his jailor?"

"Quick, quick, tell me what my playfellow wants of me. See, the sky grows red in the west. Evening is coming, and I must dress my mistress for the feast."

"I will be quick," said Boges. Suddenly he became so grave that Mandane was frightened. "If you will not believe, that I risk danger for your sake, take for granted that I help your love to humble the pride of Oropastes, who threatens to oust me from the king's favour. In spite of all plots of the chief priest, you shall—you must—become the wife of your Gaumata, as truly as I am called Boges. To-morrow evening, after the Tistar star¹ has risen, your

¹ Probably Sirius.

lover will visit you. I will manage to remove all the guards so that he may reach you safely. He will stay with you for one hour only and arrange everything. Your mistress, I know for certain, will become Cambyses' favourite wife. Afterwards she will help on your union with Gaumata, for she loves you, and cannot sufficiently praise your fidelity. To-morrow, when the Tistar star rises," he added, in the trifling voice which was habitual to him, "the sun of your happiness will rise. You look down, and are silent. Gratitude seals your little mouth. Well, am I right? I must entreat you, my dove, to be less reticent when the time comes to speak to your powerful mistress in praise of poor Boges. Shall I greet handsome Gaumata? May I tell him that you have not forgotten him, and will await him with pleasure? You hesitate. Alas! it grows dark, and I must go and see whether the women are properly dressed for the great birthday feast. Gaumata must leave Babylon the day after to-morrow. Oropastes fears that he would like to see you again, and has ordered him to return to Rhagæ when the celebration is over. You are still silent. Well, then, I cannot help you and the poor boy. I shall attain my goal without you and perhaps it is better you should forget your love. Farewell."

The girl underwent a sharp struggle. She guessed that Boges wished to deceive her. An inner voice bade her refuse to meet her lover. Her goodness and prudence gained the upper hand in her heart. She was about to cry: "Tell him I will not receive him," when her eyes fell on the silk ribbon she had once embroidered for the handsome lad. Bright scenes of her childhood, brief moments of love's wild joy, passed through her mind, quick as lightning. Love, frivolity, longing, triumphed over virtue, foreboding, prudence, and, before Boges could utter his farewell, she cried almost involuntarily: "I will await him!" and rushed to the house like a startled deer.

Boges went rapidly through the flower walks of the hanging gardens. He stopped at the ramparts of the building, and cautiously opened a hidden trap-door, which the architect had probably constructed in order to pass unnoticed from the shores of the stream, to his wife's dwelling

through one of the great piers which supported the gardens. The door moved easily on its hinges, and when Boges closed it and scattered over it a few of the river shells which covered the garden walks, it could with difficulty be discovered, even by those who sought for it. The eunuch, according to his usual custom, rubbed his ringed hands, smiled cheerfully, and murmured: "Now we must succeed. The girl easily fell into the trap. Her lover will obey my sign. The old stairs are accessible. Nitetis wept bitterly on this joyous day. The blue lily will blossom to-morrow night. Yes, yes; my little plot will succeed. Beautiful Egyptian cat, to-morrow your velvet paws will be caught in the trap which the poor despised eunuch, who may not command you, has set for you."

At these words a look of malice gleamed in the eyes of Boges as he hastened on. On the great stairs he met the eunuch Neriglissar, who lived in the gardens as chief gardener.

"How goes it with the blue lily?" he asked.

"It is developing splendidly!" cried the gardener, filled with enthusiasm at the thought of his cherished flower. "To-morrow, when the Tistar star rises, it will appear as a most beautiful blossom, as I told you. My Egyptian mistress will rejoice greatly, for she loves flowers, and I beg of you to tell the king and the Achæmenidæ that my efforts have been successful in making this rare flower blossom. It only appears in its full beauty during a single night once in ten years. Tell this to the noble Achæmenidæ, and bring them hither."

"Your wish shall be fulfilled," said Boges, smiling. "You can scarcely hope for the king's presence, for I imagine that he will not enter the hanging gardens again before his marriage with the Egyptian. Some of the Achæmenidæ are certain to come. They are so interested in flowers that they will not allow this rare sight to escape them. Perhaps I may be able to bring Cræsus; it is true he knows less about flowers than these Persians, who are mad about them; but then he is all the more grateful for every sight that pleases his eye."

"Bring him, too," cried the gardener. "He will be grateful to you, for my queen of the night is lovelier than

all the flowers yet cultivated in a royal garden. You, yourself, have seen the buds in the clear reservoir, surrounded by green leaves; when it opens my blossom will be like a gigantic sky-blue rose."

The enthusiastic artist was about to continue his praises, but Boges left him, saluting him graciously, went down the steps, placed himself in the two-wheeled wooden chariot which awaited him, and was conducted by the driver, who sat beside him guiding the horses covered with little bells and tassels, at a rapid pace to the gate of the gardens which surrounded the king's great harem.

Busy excitement reigned in Cambyses' harem. Boges had ordered that all the women of the court should be taken to the bath before the great banquet, so that they might look as fresh and beautiful as possible. The commander of the women, therefore, went at once to the wing of the palace which contained the women's bath.

Already from afar he heard the wild noise of screaming, laughing, chattering, and giggling. In the wide bath-room, which was almost overheated, were more than three hundred women, enveloped by a dense cloud of steam. The half-naked figures in thin silk garments, saturated by moisture, and clinging to the delicate forms, moved like phantoms in gay confusion over the hot marble tiles of the hall, from the roof of which lukewarm drops fell on the stone floor.

Some of the women lay in groups, ten or twenty of them clustered together engaged in merry conversation. Two women were quarrelling like naughty children. One beauty, who was hit by the dainty slipper of her neighbour, shrieked aloud; another lay in idle contemplation, motionless, like a corpse, on the damp floor. Six Armenians stood side by side and sang with clear voices a wanton love song in their native tongue. A number of fair-haired Persians were slandering poor Nitetis, so that a listener would have thought that the beautiful Egyptian resembled those monsters with which people terrify children. Naked slaves moved among the crowd, bearing well-warmed wraps on their heads to throw round their mistresses. The cries of the eunuchs who guarded the doors warned the bathers to hasten, screaming voices

called for the slaves, penetrating scents mingled with the hot vapour, and the gay, confused scene almost overpowered the spectator.

A quarter of an hour later the king's women presented a very different spectacle from the one described.

They lay quiet like dew-sprinkled roses, not sleeping, but dreaming, on soft cushions, which were spread along the walls of a huge hall. The scented moisture still clung to their loose, damp hair, while active slaves used soft little bags of camel-hair to wipe away the moisture which had penetrated the pores of the delicate skins.

Silk coverings were spread over the beautiful, tired limbs, and a number of eunuchs took care that no quarrelsome individual should disturb the peace of the dreaming women.

In spite of the guardians, the room devoted to slumbers after the bath, was seldom as quiet as it was now; for whoever disturbed the peace was in danger of being excluded from the great banquet as a punishment.

They had been dreaming for perhaps an hour, when the sound of a gong changed the whole aspect of the scene.

The women sprang from their cushions. A number of slaves entered the hall, ointments and scents were poured on the beautiful women, the luxuriant hair was skilfully plaited and decked with jewels. Costly ornaments, silk and woollen garments in all the colours of the rainbow, were produced; shoes stiff with pearls and jewels were tied on small feet, and rich golden girdles were fastened round their waists. The robing of most of the women, whose dress altogether represented the wealth of a great kingdom, was completed when Boges entered the room.

The new comer was greeted by shouts of joy. Twenty women took hands and danced round their smiling guardian, singing a simple song in praise of his virtues, which had been composed in the harem. The king was accustomed to grant some moderate wish to each of his wives on his birthday. When the dancers opened their circle a number of petitioners therefore rushed at Boges to stroke his cheeks, kiss his fleshy hands, and whisper to him all kinds of demands, and to win his intercession by flattery.

The smiling despot of the harem put his hands to his ears, pushed back the importunate women, promised Amytis the Mede that he would punish the Phœnician Esther, and the Phœnician Esther that he would punish Amytis the Mede, promised Parmys a lovelier ornament than Parisatys, and Parisatys a lovelier one than Parmys; and when he found it impossible to free himself from the crowd of petitioners, he put a gold whistle to his lips. The shrill note acted like magic on the women. The raised hands suddenly sank, the tripping feet stood still, the opened lips closed, the tumult gave way to perfect silence.

Whoever did not obey the sound of this whistle, which signified the same thing as the reading of a riot act, or a "Silence in the king's name," was certain to receive severe punishment. To-day the clear sound was unusually effective. Boges noticed this with a pleased smile, gave the whole assembly a gracious look, which betokened satisfaction, and promised in flowery language to recommend the wishes of all his dear white doves to the king. Finally, he commanded his charges to place themselves in two long lines.

The women obeyed, and allowed themselves to be surveyed like soldiers by their commander, or slaves by their purchaser.

Boges was satisfied with the dress of the majority. He gave orders that a few should be more rouged, or that the too healthy colour should be toned down with white powder. Others had to have their hair arranged higher, their eyebrows painted a deeper black, or their lips made redder. When he had finished his inspection, he left the hall and went to Phædime, who, as wife of Cambyses, occupied, like all his lawful wives, separate apartments from those of the concubines.

The fallen favourite, the humbled daughter of the Achæmenidæ, had long awaited the eunuch. She was most gorgeously dressed, almost overlaid with valuable jewels. From the small tiara, worn by the women, fell a close veil of gauze, interwoven with gold, and round it was the blue and white fillet that showed she was a daughter of the Achæmenidæ. Her beauty could not be denied, although the great development of her form—the usual

fate of Eastern women after a few years of idle harem life—was already visible. Her fair hair, which was almost too thick, flowed from her tiara, mingled with small silver chains and gold coins, and lay on her white temples.

When Boges entered, she sprang towards him eagerly, threw one look at the glass, another at the eunuch, and asked in passionate excitement: "Do I please you? shall I please him?"

Boges smiled as usual, and returned: "I am always pleased with you, my golden peacock; and the king would also be pleased if he could see you as I saw you. When you cried just now: 'Shall I please him?' you were truly beautiful, for passion made your blue eye so dark, that it looked like the night of Angramainjus, and hate opened your lips, and showed me teeth whiter than the snow of Demavend."

Phædime, who was evidently flattered, forced herself to assume the same expression, and cried: "Let us soon go to the banquet, for I tell you, Boges, my eyes will gleam with a darker light, my teeth glitter more sharply than before, when I see the Egyptian in the place which is mine by right."

"She shall not keep it long."

"Then your plot is succeeding? Speak, Boges; no longer hide from me what you intend to do. I will be silent as the dead, and help you."

"I cannot and may not tell you; but, to sweeten this bitter evening, I will reveal to you that all is carefully prepared, that the pit is dug into which we wish to throw our foe. I think I shall soon restore my golden Phædime to her old place, perhaps to a higher one, if she obeys me blindly."

"Say what I must do, I am ready for everything."

"Well said, my brave lioness. Obey my orders, and all will succeed. I may require difficult things of you, but your reward will be all the greater. Do not contradict me, we have no time to lose. Remove all unnecessary ornaments at once, and keep only the chain which the king gave you on your wedding-day. You must wear a simple dark dress instead of these light robes. When you have knelt before Cassandane, the king's mother, you must bow humbly to the Egyptian."

"Impossible!"

"No objections! Quick, quick, take off the jewels. That's right. We are only sure of success if you obey. The neck of the fairest Peri is dark compared with yours."

"But —"

"When it is your turn to ask a favour of the king, say your heart ceased to wish when your sun turned its light from you."

"Very well."

"When your father asks how you are, you must weep."

"I will weep."

"Cry so that the Achæmenidæ see you."

"What humiliation!"

"No humiliation, you will rise all the higher. Quick, rub the red from your cheeks, and paint them white;—paler still."

"I shall need the paint to hide my blushes. You ask dreadful things of me, Boges, but I will do what you tell me."

"Quick, bring the new green dress of your mistress!"

"I shall look like a slave."

"True grace is beautiful, even in rags."

"How the Egyptian will outshine me!"

"All will see that you are far from wishing to vie with her. All will ask: 'Would not Phædime be as beautiful if she had dressed herself like that proud woman?'"

"But I cannot bow before her."

"You must."

"You want to ruin and humiliate me."

"Short-sighted fool! Hear my reasons quickly, and obey. We must try to set the Achæmenidæ against our foe. How angry your grandfather, Intaphernes, your father, Otanes, will be when they see you in the dust before a stranger. Their offended pride will make them our allies; and though they are too noble, as they call it, to undertake anything against a woman, they will be more ready to help than to hinder me if I need them. When the Egyptian is destroyed, the king, if you obey me, will remember your pale cheeks, your humility, your unselfishness. The Achæmenidæ, even the magi, will beg him t

make a noble woman of his race his queen. What woman in Persia boasts of higher birth than you? Who else will receive the purple but you, my gay bird of Paradise, my lovely rose, Phædime? As you must not fear a fall from a horse, if you wish to learn to ride, so you must not shrink from humbling yourself when the greatest prize of all is at stake."

"I will obey," cried the princess.

"Then we shall conquer," returned the eunuch. "Now your eyes glow again with the right darkness. I love you so, my queen. Cambyzes shall see you thus when the dogs and birds feast on the Egyptian's tender body, and I, for the first time for months, open your chamber door to him in the silent night. Hallo, Armorges, bid the women be ready to enter their litters. I will go first, and show them their places."

The great banqueting-hall was lighter than day: thousands of lights were burning there, and the flames were reflected in the plates of gold which decked the walls. An immensely long table stood in the middle of the hall; it almost broke down beneath the weight of the gold and silver goblets, plates, dishes, jugs, cans, fruit dishes, and incense altars, which gave it an appearance of rare splendour.

"The king will appear soon," cried the chief butler, a high dignitary of the court, to the king's cupbearer, a noble relative of the monarch. "Are all the jugs filled, the wines tested, the cups ready, and the wine skins sent by Polycrates emptied?"

"All is ready," returned the cupbearer. "That wine of Chios surpasses in excellence all the wines that I have ever drunk, even Nebuchadnezzar's favourite drink, the grape juice of Chelbon. Taste."

With these words he seized a delicate golden cup with one hand, a jug of the same metal with the other, raised the jug, and poured the wine in a wide curve so skilfully into the cup, that not a drop fell to the ground. Then he seized the goblet with the tips of his fingers, and bending gracefully, offered it to the butler.

He drank the precious draught thoughtfully, and

smacked his lips. He gave back the goblet to the cupbearer, exclaiming: "Truly a noble draught, specially pleasant because it is handed to the drinker with a grace which you alone possess. Strangers are right when they admire Persian cupbearers, and call them the most skilful in the world."

"I thank you," returned the other, kissing his friend's brow. "I am proud of my office, which the great king bestows only on his friends; and yet in this suffocating heat of Babylon, it becomes a burden. When shall we go to the summer residence, Ecbatana, or Pasargada?"

"I spoke to the king about it to-day. He did not wish to move because of the war with the Massagetæ, preferring to march into the field from Babylon. If, as seems probable after to-day's news, the war is not undertaken, we shall go to Susa three days after the king's wedding, that is, in a week's time."

"Susa?" said the cupbearer. "That is very little cooler than Babylon. Besides, the old Memnonia¹ is being rebuilt."

"The satrap of Susa has informed the king that the new palace is finished, and surpasses all buildings that have ever been erected in splendour and magnificence. Cambyzes had scarcely heard this when he cried: 'We will go there three days after my wedding. I will show the Egyptian princess that we Persians understand architecture as well as her ancestors did. The Nile has accustomed her to heat; and she will be comfortable in our lovely Susa.' The king seems wonderfully fond of this woman!"

"Yes, indeed! He neglects all the other women for her sake, and will soon make her his queen."

"That is wrong. The daughter of the Achæmenidæ, Phædime, has older and better rights."

"Certainly, but what the king wills is good."

"The ruler's will is the will of the gods."

"Well said. A true Persian rejoices when he is allowed to kiss his master's hand, though it be dyed with the blood of his child."

¹ The citadel of Susa was called Memnonia by the ancients.

“ Cambyses executed my brother, but I no more bear him a grudge than I do the gods, who robbed me of my parents. Hallo, servants, draw back the curtains, for the guards approach. Hurry, you dogs, and attend to your duties. Farewell, Artabazos ; a hot night awaits us.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THE POISONED CUP.

THE chief butler went to meet the approaching guests, and showed them to their places with the assistance of a few other noble staff-bearers.

When all were seated, the trumpets announced the king's approach. As soon as he entered the guests rose and received their ruler with a thundering, oft-repeated cry: "Victory to the king!"

A purple Sardinian carpet, on which none but he and Cassandane might walk, showed the way to his place. The king's mother, led by Cræsus, preceded her son, and took possession of a throne at the head of the table, which stood higher than Cambyzes' golden chair. The lawful wives sat on the ruler's left, Nitetis at his side, then came Atossa, by her sat Phædime, in her simple dress, her cheeks painted white, and beside the lowest wife of the king sat Boges. Then came the chief priest, Oropastes, a few other magi of high rank, the satraps of several provinces, and below them the Jew Belshazzar, and a number of Persians, Medes, and eunuchs who occupied high offices in the state.

On the monarch's right sat Bartja, beyond him, Cræsus, Hystaspes, Gobryas, Araspes, and other Achæmenidæ placed according to rank and age. Some of the concubines sat at the lower end of the table, others stood opposite the king to heighten the enjoyment of the feast with songs and music. Behind them stood several eunuchs, whose duty it was to see that they did not raise their eyes to the men.

Cambyzes' first glance was for Nitetis, who sat beside

him with all the dignity and splendour of a queen, pale, but unspeakably beautiful in her new purple robes.

The eyes of the betrothed pair met. Cambyzes felt that Nitetis' eyes were fixed on him with deep love. But he saw with the keen instinct of his passion, that something, he knew not what, had happened to her. There was an expression of sad gravity about her lips, her usually calm, clear, cheerful eyes were dimmed by a sadness perceptible to him alone. "I will ask her afterwards what has happened to her;" thought the king. "My subjects must not see how I love this girl."

He now kissed his mother, his brother and sister, and his nearest relatives on the brow, uttered a short prayer, in which he thanked the gods for their favour, and asked for a new year of happiness for himself and the Persians; mentioned an enormous sum which he had given to his countrymen, and bade the staff-bearers lead those before him who hoped that on this day of mercy some moderate wish would be granted.

None of the petitioners went away unsatisfied, for each had been obliged the day before to tell the chief staff-bearer his wish, and to find out whether it could be granted. In the same way the wishes of the women were examined by the eunuchs before the king heard them. After the men, Boges led the crowd of women past the ruler; Cassandane alone remained seated.

Atossa and Nitetis opened the procession, Phædime and another beauty followed the princesses. The other was most gorgeously dressed, and Boges had chosen her as companion of the fallen favourite, in order to heighten the effect of her almost shabby simplicity.

Intaphernes and Otanes, as Boges had anticipated, looked angrily at their granddaughter and daughter, who appeared pale and plainly dressed in this scene of splendour. When she stood opposite him, Cambyzes, who was well acquainted with Phædime's extravagant love of dress, looked with mingled anger and astonishment at her simple dress and pale face. His brow darkened, and he angrily addressed the woman who sank down at his feet: "What does this beggar's dress mean at the feast held in my honour? Do you no longer know the custom of our nation,

which forbids the subject to appear before his ruler except in full dress? Truly, had it been another day, and did I not respect you as the daughter of my nearest relatives, I would let the eunuch lead you back to the harem, where in solitude you could reflect over what is fitting."

These words made the humbled woman's task easier. She wept loud and bitterly as she looked at the angry king, and raised her eyes and hands so beseechingly that his anger changed to pity, and raising her from her knees, he asked: "Have you a wish?"

"What have I left to wish for, since my sun has withdrawn its light from me?" she stammered amidst low sobs.

Cambyzes shrugged his shoulders and asked again: "Do you wish for nothing? Formerly, I could dry your tears with gifts; ask once more for golden comfort."

"Phædime desires nothing more. For whom should she want jewels since her king, her husband, has turned from her the light of his eyes?"

"Then I cannot help you," cried the king, turning angrily from the kneeling woman.

It was well that Boges had advised Phædime to paint her face white, for under the pale colour, her cheeks glowed with anger and shame. In spite of this she controlled her passion, and obeying the eunuch, bowed low and reverently before the king's mother and Nitetis, and let her tears flow unrestrained in sight of all the Achæmenidæ.

Otanes and Intaphernes with difficulty hid their anger at Phædime's humiliation, and many of the Achæmenidæ looked with great sympathy on the unhappy woman and with silent anger on the beautiful favoured stranger.

All the ceremonies were ended, and the feast began. Before the king, in a golden basket, daintily surrounded by other fruit, lay a gigantic pomegranate as large as a child's head. He now noticed it for the first time, examined the beautiful fruit with the eye of a judge, and asked: "Who grew this wonderful fruit?"

"Your servant Oropastes," answered the chief priest, bowing low. "For many years I have been engaged in gardening, and I have ventured to lay this magnificent fruit at your feet as the finest result of my efforts."

"I thank you," cried the king, "for, my friends, this pomegranate will make it easy for me to choose a governor when we go to war. By Mithra! he who knows how to tend a little tree with such care will be excellent in great things. What a fruit! Whoever saw its like? I thank you again, Oropastes, and since the gratitude of kings must not consist of mere words I now appoint you governor of the whole kingdom in case of war. Yes, my friends, we shall not dream away our days in idle peace much longer. The Persian loses his gaiety without the delight of war."

A murmur of applause thrilled the rows of the Achæmenidæ. "Victory to the king!" was heard again and again.

The anger aroused by the sight of the humbled woman was quickly forgotten; thoughts of battle, dreams of immortal fame and crowns of victory, memories of past heroic deeds, increased the festive mood of the revellers. The king, himself more temperate than usual this day, encouraged his guests to drink, and rejoiced in his heroes' tumultuous joy and longing for battle, and still more in the wonderful beauty of the Egyptian who sat beside him, paler than usual, and quite exhausted by the exertions of the day and the unaccustomed weight of the tiara. He had never before felt so happy.

What did he lack, what was there left for him to desire, since the deity had added happy love to all the treasures which the heart can long for? His obstinacy was softened to mild graciousness, his stern hardness to kind yielding, when he cried to Bartja, who sat by him :

"Now, brother, have you forgotten my promise? Do you not remember that you were to ask of me to-day what your heart longed for, with the certainty that your wish would be fulfilled? That is right. Empty the cup and raise your courage. But you must ask no trifle. To-day I am in the mood to give great presents. Ah! you wish to tell me in secret what you desire. Come closer. I am curious to know what the happiest youth in my whole kingdom desires so eagerly, that he blushes like a girl as soon as his wish is mentioned."

Bartja, whose cheeks glowed with excitement, bent

towards his brother with a smile, and told him briefly and in a low whisper the story of his love.

Sappho's father had helped to defend his native town, Phocæa, against Cyrus' army. The youth wisely emphasized this circumstance, called his love, with truth, the daughter of a Greek warrior of noble birth, and concealed the fact that he had gained wealth by commercial enterprise. He described to his brother the grace, culture, and love of his bride, and was about to appeal to Cræsus' testimony, when Cambyses interrupted him, and kissing his brow, cried: "Enough words, my brother. Follow your heart's desire. I know the power of love, and will help you to gain our mother's consent."

Bartja, overcome by happiness and gratitude, threw himself at his royal brother's feet; he raised him kindly and cried, turning specially to Nitetis and Cassandane: "Listen, my friends! The race of Cyrus is to bear new blossoms, for our brother Bartja has decided to end his single life which is displeasing to the gods.¹ In a few days the youth will go to your home, Nitetis, and bring the second jewel from the shores of the Nile to our mountainous home."

"What ails you, sister?" cried young Atossa before Cambyses had finished, while she sprinkled with wine the brow of the Egyptian who lay unconscious in her arms.

"What ailed you?" asked blind Cassandane, when after a few minutes the king's betrothed awoke to consciousness.

"My joy, this happiness, Tachot," stammered Nitetis.

Cambyses, like his sister, had sprung to the side of the fainting girl. When she had fully recovered consciousness, he begged her to strengthen herself with wine, gave her the cup himself, and completed his narrative. "Bartja is going to your home, my wife, in order to fetch from Nau-cratis on the Nile, his wife, the granddaughter of a certain Rhodopis, the daughter of a noble warrior, from gallant Phocæa."

"What was that?" cried the king's mother.

¹ The Persian religion commanding that all should marry, cast contempt on the unwedded. To awaken and maintain life was considered the highest aim. It was therefore praiseworthy to have many children.

"What ails you?" asked bright Atossa, in an anxious almost reproachful tone.

"Nitetis!" cried Croesus warningly to his charge.

But the warning came too late, for the cup which Cambyzes had handed to his love fell from her hands, clattering to the ground.

The eyes of all present were fixed in anxious expectation on the face of the king, who had sprung from his seat pale as death, with trembling lips, and convulsively clasped hands. Nitetis looked up at her lover begging for indulgence, but he feared the magic of her glance, turned his head and cried hoarsely: "Lead the women to their apartments, Boges, I do not wish to see them any more. The drinking bout can begin. Sleep well, my mother, and beware of feeding serpents with your heart's blood. Sleep well, Egyptian, and pray that the gods may give you a greater power of deception. Friends, to-morrow we shall hunt. Give me drink. Fill the great goblet, but taste very, very carefully. To-day I fear poison for the first time. Do you hear, Egyptian? I fear poison, and all poison and medicine, ha! ha! as every child knows, all poisons come from Egypt."

Nitetis staggered, rather than walked, from the hall. Boges accompanied her and bade her bearers hurry.

When they reached the hanging gardens he confided the Egyptian to the charge of the eunuch who guarded her house and left her, rubbing his hands, chuckling softly, and saying, not respectfully as usual, but in a confidential, friendly tone: "Dream of handsome Bartja and his Egyptian love, my white cat of the Nile. Have you any message for the handsome boy, whose love story alarmed you so? Think well. Poor Boges will gladly act as mediator, despised Boges wishes you well, humble Boges would grieve to see the lofty palm of Sais fall, the prophet Boges foretells a speedy return to Egypt or a calm repose in the black earth of Babylon, good Boges wishes you a quiet sleep. Farewell, my crushed flower, my gay serpent, who has wounded herself, my cone fallen from the pine tree."

"Insolent man!" cried the princess indignantly.

"Thank you," answered the monster, smiling.

"I shall complain of your behaviour," threatened Nitetis.

"How amiable you are," returned Boges.

"Begone!" cried the Egyptian.

"I obey your commands," whispered the eunuch, as if he were murmuring a love secret in her ear.

Disgusted and horrified at his mockery, the dreadful significance of which she understood, she shrank back, and turning her back on Boges hastened towards the house. He called after her: "Remember me, beautiful queen, remember me. All that happens to you during the next few days will be a loving gift of poor, despised Boges."

As soon as the Egyptian had vanished he bade the guards in stern tones watch the gardens carefully. "Whoever allows anyone, except me, to enter this place is a dead man. No one, do you hear, least of all messengers from the king's mother, Atossa, or the nobles may put a foot on these stairs. If Croesus, or Oropastes, wish to see the Egyptian, refuse peremptorily. You understand? Mind, if you are led astray by gifts or entreaties, you have all lived long enough. No one, no one may enter these gardens without my special permission. I think you know me. Take these gold pieces as a reward for your task, which is rendered more difficult than usual to-day, and hear me swear by Mithra, that I will not spare the guilty or negligent."

The warders bowed, and were resolved to obey their chief, for they knew he was not accustomed to jest when he threatened, and they guessed that great events might be anticipated, for Boges never gave away his money without cause.

The same litter which had borne the Egyptian, carried the eunuch back to the banqueting hall.

The king's wives had left, only the concubines stood in the places assigned to them and sang their monotonous songs, unheard amidst the noise of the men. The revellers had long forgotten the fainting woman. Each new cup increased the tumult and the confused cries of the drunken. The solemnity of the place and the presence of the mighty king seemed forgotten. Here a tipsy man shrieked aloud in drunken glee; there two warriors, their affection awakened by wine, embraced each other; there an intoxi-

cated novice was carried from the hall by strong servants; and yonder, an old toper seized the jug and emptied it at a draught, amidst the joyous cries of his companions. At the head of the table sat the king, pale as death, listlessly staring into his cup. Whenever he looked at Bartja, he clenched his fist. He avoided speaking to him, and left his questions unanswered. The longer he sat staring before him, the firmer became his conviction that the Egyptian had deceived him, and pretended to love him, while her heart belonged to Bartja. How shamefully he had been deceived, how deeply falsehood must be rooted in the heart of this skilled hypocrite, if the mere news that his brother loved another sufficed not only to destroy her accustomed arts, but also to rob her of consciousness.

Otanes, Phædime's father, had cried when Nitetis left the hall: "The Egyptians seem very much affected by the loves of their brothers-in-law; Persian women are less lavish of their feelings, and keep them for their husband."

The proud man pretended not to hear these words, and closed his ears and eyes in order not to notice the murmurs and the glances of his guests, which confirmed the opinion that he had been deceived.

Bartja was not to blame for her faithlessness, she only loved the handsome youth; loved him the more, perhaps, the less confident she felt of her love being returned. If he had entertained the faintest suspicion of his brother, he would have had him killed on the spot. Bartja was innocent of the deceit and the misfortune, but he was its cause, and the old anger which was just subdued in his heart awoke again, and as every relapse is more dangerous than the first attack, it increased in violence.

He thought and thought, and did not know how to punish the false woman. Her death would not satisfy him, she should bear greater ills than that. Should he send her back to Egypt in shame and disgrace? No; she loved her home, and would be received by her parents with open arms. Should he, after she had confessed her guilt (for he was determined to force a confession from her), shut up the faithless woman in a lonely prison, or should he give her as a servant to his concubines, or to Boges?

Yes, that was the best plan. Thus would he punish the faithless woman, thus would he chastise the hypocrite who had allowed herself to play a guilty game with him, and without whom he could not bear to live. Then he said, "Bartja must go from here, for fire and water will mix before this child of fortune and I, miserable man, agree. His descendants will one day divide my treasures and wear this crown, but I am still king, and will prove it."

The thought of his proud omnipotence flashed through his mind, and roused him from his dreams to new life. He threw his golden goblet in wild passion in the midst of the hall, so that the wine fell on those nearest him like a shower of rain, and cried: "Cease your idle chatter and useless noise. Drunk as we are, let us hold a council of war, and consider what answer we owe the Massagetæ. I ask you for your answer first, Hystaspes, as the eldest here."

Darius' aged father answered: "It seems to me that the ambassadors of the nomads have left us no choice. We cannot go forth against uninhabited steppes, but as our armies are ready, and our swords have reposed too long already, we need war. For this purpose we require nothing but strong enemies, and to make enemies is the easiest thing I know."

At these words the Persians uttered shouts of joy, but when the sound ceased, Croesus began to speak: "You are as old as I am, Hystaspes, but, like a true Persian, you think you can only be happy in war and battle. The staff, once a sign of your office as general, is now your support, and yet you speak like a hot-tempered youth. I grant you foes are easily found, but only fools seek them by violence. He who rashly makes himself enemies is like a criminal who mutilates himself. If we have foes, it is right that we oppose them, as it is right for a wise man to face his misfortunes boldly. My friend, let us commit no crime, and begin no unjust war hateful to the gods, but wait till we are wronged, and then conquer or die, conscious that we march to battle in a just cause."

A low murmur of applause interrupted the speaker, but it was drowned by the cry: "Hystaspes is right. Let us seek a foe."

The ambassador, Prexaspes, whose turn came next, cried, laughing: "Let us follow both these noble old men—Crœsus, by waiting for a foe; Hystaspes, by increasing our sensitiveness, and taking for granted that all who do not cheerfully consider themselves members of the great realm of our father Cyrus, are among the enemies of Persia. Let us, for example, ask the Indians if they are too proud to obey your sceptre, Cambyses. If they are, they do not love us, and he who does not love us is naturally our foe."

"Not so," cried Zopyrus. "We must have war at any price."

"I vote for Crœsus," cried Gobryas.

"I too," cried noble Artabazus.

"We are for Hystaspes," cried Araspes, old Intaphernes, and other old companions in arms of Cyrus.

"No war against the Massagetæ, who flee from us, but war at any price," shouted the general Megabyzus, father of Zopyrus, striking the table with his heavy fist so that the golden vessels jingled against each other, and several cups were upset.

"No war with the Massagetæ, on whom the gods themselves have avenged Cyrus," said the chief priest.

"War! war!" shrieked the drunken Persians in wild confusion.

Calm and cold, Cambyses for a time let his warriors shout in wild enthusiasm; then he rose from his seat and cried in tones of thunder: "Silence! hear your king."

The words acted like a charm on the tumultuous host. Even the most intoxicated submitted in unconscious obedience to the ruler's command, who lowered his voice and continued: "I did not ask if you desired peace or war, for I know every Persian prefers the toil of war to inglorious idleness; I wished to know what answer you would advise me to give the Massagetæ. Do you consider that the soul of my father, the man to whom you are indebted, is sufficiently avenged?"

A low murmur in the affirmative, interrupted by a few negatives, answered the king, whose second question: "Shall we accept the conditions of the embassy sent to me, and grant peace to this people, reduced in number and

afflicted by the gods?" was answered by all present in eager affirmative.

"That is what I wished to know," continued Cambyses.

"To-morrow, according to ancient custom, we will, when sober, consider what we resolved when intoxicated. Drink away the last hours of the night. I shall leave you and await you with the last cry of the holy bird Parodar,¹ at the gate of Bel for the chase."

With these words the king left the hall. A loud "Victory to the king!" followed him.

Boges, the eunuch, had crept from the hall a few minutes before his master. In the court he found one of the under gardeners from the hanging gardens.

"What do you want here?" he asked him.

"I have something for Prince Bartja.

"Bartja! Did he ask your master for seeds or cuttings?"

The boy shook his sunburnt head and smiled.

"Then another sent you?" asked Boges becoming more attentive.

"Yes, another."

"O, the Egyptian sends her brother-in-law a message through you?"

"Who told you?"

"Nitetis told me about it. Give me what you have. I will give it to Bartja at once."

"I must give it to no one but the prince."

"Give it me. I can discharge the commission better than you."

"I may not."

"Obey me or—"

At this moment the king approached the disputants. Boges considered for a second, then with loud voice he summoned the guard and bade them arrest the astonished boy.

"What is the matter?" asked Cambyses.

"This insolent fellow," answered the eunuch, "has forced his way into the palace to bring Bartja a message from your wife Nitetis."

¹ The Persians held the cock sacred, for he drove the dark divs of night back to their caves.

When the boy became aware of the king's presence, he fell on his knees and touched the ground with his forehead.

Cambyses, pale as death, looked at the unhappy boy. Then he turned to the eunuch and asked: "What does the Egyptian want of my brother?"

"The boy declares he received orders to give what he brought to Bartja alone."

At these words the messenger looked piteously at the king, and held a papyrus scroll towards him. Cambyses snatched it from him and stamped with rage when he saw the Greek characters, which he was unable to read.

When he had collected himself he asked the boy, looking at him with a terrible glance: "Who gave you this?"

"Mandane, the maid of my mistress, daughter of the magus."

"For my brother Bartja?"

"She said I was to give this letter to the handsome prince before the feast, to greet him from my mistress, Nitetis, and to tell him—"

The king stamped with rage and impatience.

The boy was almost too terrified to speak, and continued with difficulty: "The prince walked by you before the feast, so that I could not speak to him. Now I am waiting for him, for Mandane promised me a piece of gold if I fulfilled her commission properly."

"You have not done so!" thundered the king, who thought that he had been shamefully deceived. "You have not done so. Guards, arrest the fellow!"

The boy raised his voice and looked entreatingly at the king, but in vain, for, quick as thought, the whip-bearers seized him, and the king, who hastened towards his room with rapid steps, no longer heard him.

Boges followed the king, laughing softly and rubbing his hands.

The attendants were about to disrobe their master, but he repulsed them angrily, and ordered them to leave him at once. When they had left the room, he called Boges and murmured: "From this hour I will put you in charge of the hanging gardens and the Egyptian. Guard her well. If any person or message reaches her without my knowledge, your life is forfeited."

"But if Cassandane or Atossa send to her—"

"Dismiss the messengers and send them word that I shall look on every attempt they make to communicate with Nitetis as an insult to myself."

"May I ask a favour, O king?"

"You have chosen your time badly."

"I feel so ill. Appoint someone else as guardian of the gardens to-morrow."

"No, leave me!"

"Violent fever rages in my veins. I fainted three times to-day. If during such an attack anyone—"

"Who could take your place?"

"The Lydian chief eunuch, Candaules. He is true as gold, and uncompromisingly firm. A day of rest will restore my health. Be gracious."

"No one is as badly served as the king. Candaules may take your place to-morrow. Give him strict orders and tell him that any negligence will cost him his life. Leave me!"

"Another thing, my king. You know the rare blue lily will blossom to-morrow night in the hanging gardens. Hystaspes, Intaphernes, Gobryas, Cræsus, and Oropastes, the greatest florists at your court, would like to see it. May they enter the gardens for a few minutes? Candaules will take care that they do not speak to the Egyptian."

"Let Candaules keep his eyes open if he values his life. Go!"

Boges bowed low and left the king's apartment. He gave a few pieces of gold to the slaves who lighted him with torches. He was in a good humour. All his plans were succeeding beyond his expectation, for Nitetis' fate seemed virtually decided, and he held the life of Candaules, his equal in rank, whom he detested, in his hands.

Cambyzes walked up and down his room till morning. When the cocks crowed, he had determined to force Nitetis to confess, and then to send her to the great harem as a slave to his concubines. Bartja, the destroyer of his happiness, should leave at once for Egypt, and afterwards rule as satrap over a distant province. He shrank from the crime of fratricide, but he knew himself well enough to foresee that he would kill the hated man in a moment of

passion, if he were not removed beyond the reach of his anger.

Two hours after the sun had risen, Cambyses, on his snorting steed, flew far in advance of his huge retinue, the members of which were armed with shields, swords, lances, bows and lassos, to hunt the game, which was roused by more than a thousand dogs in the great preserves of Babylon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ARREST OF BARTJA.

THE hunt was over. Carts, full of dead game, including several enormous boars which Cambyzes had slain with his own hand, followed the returning hunters, who separated at the palace gates to go to their dwellings and exchange the ancient Persian hunting-dress of simple leather for the splendid Median court dress.

During the chase the king, with scarcely suppressed agitation, gave his brother the apparently kind order to set forth next day to fetch Sappho, and bring her to Persia. He, at the same time, gave him the revenues of the towns Bactros, Rhagæ, and Sinope for the maintenance of his new household, and bestowed the revenues of her father's town, Phocæa, on the young bride.

Bartja thanked his brother heartily for his generosity. But Cambyzes remained icily cold, uttered a few farewell words, and turned his back on him to follow a wild ass.

When they returned from the chase the young hero invited his friends, Cræsus, Darius, Zopyrus, and Gyges to a farewell revel.

Cræsus was to join them later on, for he had promised to be present with the nobles when the Tistar star rose, to witness the blossoming of the blue lily.

Early in the morning he had tried to see Nitetis, but the guards resolutely refused him admittance. Now the blue lily seemed to afford him the opportunity of an interview with his favourite, for whose behaviour on the previous day he could scarcely account, and he was filled with great anxiety at the strict restraint to which she was subjected.

The young Achæmenidæ sat, in the twilight, in a shady bower in the royal garden, beside which clear fountains plashed, engaged in cheerful conversation. Araspes, a noble Persian, and friend of the late Cyrus, had joined them, and was enjoying the prince's excellent wine.

"Happy Bartja!" cried the old bachelor. "You are going to a golden land to fetch the woman you love, while I, poor bachelor, go to my grave, despised by all the world, and leaving neither wives nor children to mourn for me and ask the gods for a gentle judgment on my soul."

"How can you entertain such thoughts?" cried Zopyrus, raising his goblet. "Believe me, every man who takes a wife is forced by her at least once a day to rue the fact that he did not remain unwed. Be cheerful, father, and remember that you are lamenting your own folly or wisdom. One chooses women, like nuts, by the look of the shell. Who knows whether it contains a good or a bad kernel, or any kernel at all? I speak from experience, for though I am only twenty-two, I have five lovely wives, and a host of slaves, both beautiful and ugly, in my house."

Araspes smiled bitterly.

"What prevents you from marrying still?" said Gyges. "You are only sixty, and you could rival many younger men in bearing, strength, and endurance. You are one of the king's noblest relations, and you could have twenty beautiful young wives."

"Sweep before your own door," answered the bachelor. "If I were like you, truly, I would not have remained unmarried till I was thirty."

"An oracle forbade me to marry."

"Folly! How can a sensible man care about oracles? In dreams alone the gods foretell the future. I should have thought the fate of your own father must have taught you that the Greek priests deceive their best friends shamefully."

"You do not understand that, Araspes."

"And do not wish to understand it, boy, for you believe in oracles because you do not understand them, and in your narrow-mindedness you call those things miraculous that you do not understand. You place more implicit trust in what you do not comprehend, than in the most

self-evident truth. The oracle deceived your father and ruined him, but the oracle is a miracle, and therefore, full of confidence, you allow it to deprive you of happiness."

"You blaspheme, Araspes. Is it the gods' fault if we misunderstand their words?"

"Certainly; for if they wished to aid us they would give us the intelligence needed to understand them when they speak to us. What is the use of fine words if they are spoken in a language I do not know?"

"Cease your useless arguments," cried Darius. "Araspes, you had better tell us why for so long a time you have allowed the priests to reproach you; why you allow yourself to be slighted at the feasts, and scorned by the women, and though you congratulate every bridegroom, remain a bachelor yourself."

Araspes looked down thoughtfully. Then he shook his head, took a deep draught, and said: "Friends, I have my reasons, but I cannot tell them to you now."

"Tell them, tell them!"

"I cannot, boys, I cannot! Happy Bartja! I empty this bumper to the health of your fair Sappho, and this one I dedicate to your future happiness, my favourite, Darius."

"I thank you," cried Bartja, joyously raising his cup to his lips.

"You mean well," murmured Darius, looking down gloomily.

"Why, son of Hystaspes," cried the old man, looking at the grave youth, "such stern looks ill befit the bridegroom who drinks to his beloved. Is not the little daughter of Gobryas the noblest of the young Persian maidens after Atossa? Is she not beautiful?"

"Artystone possesses all the advantages of the Achæmenidæ," said Darius, still frowning.

"What more do you desire, you discontented boy?"

Darius raised his goblet, and looked into it.

"The boy is in love as truly as my name is Araspes," cried the old man.

"What foolish men you are," interrupted Zopyrus.

"One, contrary to Persian custom, remains a bachelor, the other does not marry because an oracle frightens him.

Bartja means to content himself with one wife, and Darius looks like a destur singing funeral hymns, because his father orders him to be happy with the loveliest and noblest girl in Persia."

"Zopyrus is right," cried the old man. "Darius is ungrateful to fortune."

Bartja kept his eyes fixed on his friend during these reproaches. He saw that his companions' jests displeased him, and full of his own happiness, he pressed his hand and said: "I am sorry that I shall not be here for your wedding. When I return I hope to find you reconciled to your father's choice."

"Perhaps," answered Darius, "when you return I shall be able to show you a second and a third wife."

"Anahita grant it," cried Zopyrus. "The Achæmenidæ would soon die out, if all acted like Araspes and Gyges. Your one wife, Bartja, is not worth mentioning. It is your duty, if only to preserve the race of Cyrus, to lead home three wives at once."

"I hate the custom of taking many wives," cried Bartja. "By doing so we place ourselves below the women, of whom we expect that they should remain faithful to us during a lifetime, while we, who ought to esteem fidelity more than anything, pledge vows of unchangeable love to one woman to-day, to another to-morrow."

"Nonsense," cried Zopyrus. "I would rather lose my tongue than tell lies to a man, but our women are such deceitful creatures we must pay them with their own coin."

"The Greek women are different, because they are differently treated," returned Bartja. "Sappho told me of a Greek woman, I think she was called Penelope, who waited in patient love for twenty years for her lord, who was supposed to be dead, though fifty suitors frequented her house daily."

"My wives would scarcely wait for me so long," cried Zopyrus, laughing gaily. "I must confess that I should not grieve, if, after twenty years' absence, I found an empty house on my return; instead of the faithless ones, who would meanwhile have become old, I could take beautiful young girls into my harem. But not everyone

finds a seducer, and our women prefer an absent lord to no lord at all."

"What if your wives heard you?" laughed Araspes.

"They would declare war on me, or, worse still, they would make peace with each other."

"How so?"

"How so? It's easy to see you have no experience."

"Initiate us into the secrets of your married life."

"Gladly. You can imagine that five wives in one house do not live as peaceably together as five pigeons in one pigeon-house. Mine, at least, carry on an incessant and mortal war. I am used to it, and enjoy their liveliness. A year ago they became united for the first time, and I must call that day of peace the most miserable in my life."

"You jest!"

"No, I speak in solemn earnest. The wretched eunuch who has to guard the five let in an old jeweller from Tyre. Each chose a costly ornament. When I reached home, Sudabe approached, and begged for money for her jewels. I refused to pay the price, as it was exorbitant. Each of the five asked me separately for money. I refused flatly, and went to court. When I returned home all my wives sat weeping together. One embraced the other, and called her her companion in misfortune. The foes rose in touching unanimity, and overwhelmed me with abuse and threats till I left the room. When I wished to retire I found five closed doors. Next morning the lamentations of the evening were repeated. I fled again, and hunted with the king. When I returned, weary, hungry, and cold (it was spring, and we were still at Ecbatana, while the snow lay several feet deep on the Orontes), I found no fire on the hearth, no meal prepared. The noble crew had conspired to extinguish the fire and to forbid the cooks to do their duty, in order to punish me. Worst of all, they had also kept the jewels. I had scarcely commanded the slaves to light the fire and prepare a meal, when the insolent jeweller appeared and demanded the money. I refused to pay, and again spent the night locked out by my wives, and next morning sacrificed ten talents for the sake of peace. Since then I dread union among my beloved ones as I dread the evil

divs, and I like nothing better than their little quarrels and disputes."

"Poor Zopyrus!" laughed Bartja.

"Poor!" said the lively husband. "I assure you I am happier than you. My wives are young and graceful, and when they grow old, what is to prevent me from taking more beautiful ones to my home, who will appear twice as lovely when compared with the faded women. Hallo, slave, bring the lamps. The sun has set, and only when bright light shines on the table, does the wine taste good."

"Hark! how beautifully the nightingale sings!" cried Darius, who had gone into the open air.

"By Mithra, son of Hystaspes, you are in love," Araspes cried, interrupting the youth's exclamation. "As truly as I am called Araspes, he who leaves his wine to listen to the nightingale, has been wounded by the flowery arrow of love."

"You are right, father," cried Bartja. "Philomele, as the Greeks call our nightingale, in whose heart love puts such beautiful songs, is the bird of love among all nations. Of whose beauty were you dreaming when you stepped out into the night to listen to her?"

"Of none," he answered. "You know I like to observe the starry heavens. The Tistar star rose this evening with such beauty, that I left my wine to look at it. I should have had to close my ears to avoid hearing the nightingale's loud song."

"You opened them wide enough. Your delighted exclamation proved that," laughed Araspes.

"Enough!" cried Darius, vexed by this teasing.

"Imprudent boy," whispered the old man, "now you have really betrayed yourself. If you were not in love, you would laugh instead of getting angry. But I will not irritate you. What do you read in the stars?"

Darius at these words again looked up at the sky, and fixed his glance on a bright constellation that hovered over the horizon. Zopyrus looked at the astrologer and cried to his friends: "Something important must be happening up there. Darius, tell us what is taking place in the sky?"

"Nothing good," he returned. "I must speak with you alone, Bartja."

"Why? Araspes is discreet, and I have no secrets from the others."

"But—"

"Begin!"

"No; I must ask you to follow me into the garden."

Bartja nodded to his guests, put his arm round Darius' shoulder, and went out with him into the moonlight. When they were alone, Hystaspes' son seized his friend's hand and said: "To-day for the third time there are movements in the heavens that bode you no good. Your evil star approaches your good star so closely, that it needs but little knowledge of astrology to prophesy that a serious danger threatens you. Be careful, Bartja, and leave to-day for Egypt, for the stars tell me that the danger threatens you on the Euphrates, and not in distant lands."

"Do you really believe in the prophetic powers of the stars?"

"They never lie."

"Then it would be folly to strive to escape what they foretell?"

"Certainly, no one can escape his fate; but destiny is like the fencing masters, who prefer that pupil who can fight best and most gallantly with them. Start for Egypt to-day, Bartja."

"I cannot, for I have not said farewell to my mother and Atossa."

"Bid them farewell through a messenger, and let Cræsus explain to them the reasons for your departure."

"They would think me a coward!"

"To flee from man is shameful; to avoid destiny is wise."

"You contradict yourself, Darius. What would the fencing master say to the pupil who fled?"

"He would rejoice at the stratagem by which the individual strove to escape a superior power."

"Which would finally overtake and destroy him. How can I seek to delay a danger which you yourself say is inevitable? If a tooth hurts me, I at once have it extracted, while women and cowards suffer for weeks in order to

delay the painful operation as long as possible. I await danger boldly, and hope that I may quickly meet it, so as to leave it behind me all the sooner."

"You do not know its extent."

"Do you fear for my life?"

"No."

"Tell me then what you fear?"

"The Egyptian priest at Sais with whom I observed the stars, cast your horoscope with me. He was more skilled in observing the heavens than any man I have ever met. I owe him much knowledge, and will not conceal from you that he has several times drawn my attention to dangers which threatened you."

"You concealed this from me?"

"Why should I alarm you prematurely? Now that your fate approaches I warn you."

"I thank you, and will be cautious. Once I should not have listened to your warnings, but since I love, it seems to me that I must not risk my life as freely as formerly."

"I understand your feeling."

"You understand me? Then Araspes is right. You do not deny it?"

"A dream without hope."

"What woman could reject you?"

"Reject!"

"I do not understand you. Does your courage fail you before a woman—you the boldest hunter, the strongest wrestler, the wisest of all young Persians?"

"May I confide in you, Bartja, confide in you more than in my own father?"

"You may."

"I love the daughter of Cyrus, your and the king's sister, Atossa."

"Do I understand you right? You love Atossa! I thank you, you pure Amesha Spenta.¹ Henceforth I shall no longer fear your stars, for instead of the dangers with which they threaten me, they give me an unexpected

¹ Amesha Spenta (sacred immortals) resemble the Hebrew arch-angels. They surround Auramazda's throne.

happiness. Embrace me, my brother, and tell me the story of your love, that I may help you to turn to reality what you call a dream without hope."

"Before our departure for Egypt, we, as you know, went with the whole court from Ecbatana to Susa. At that time I commanded the division of the Immortals, which had to protect the carriage of the royal women. In the narrow pass which leads over the Orontes, the horses which drew the carriage of your mother and sister fell. The yoke to which the horses were fastened broke from the axle, and before my eyes the heavy four-wheeled carriage fell into the abyss. We urged our horses to their utmost speed, and saw the vehicle disappear. When we reached the scene of misfortune, we expected to see ruins and dead bodies, but the gods had taken your family under their powerful protection, and the chariot hurled into the abyss rested with its broken wheels on the branches of two gigantic cypress trees, which clung with their tough roots to the split slate, and stretched their dark crests to the edge of the path.

"Quick as thought I sprang from my horse, and without reflecting climbed down one of the cypresses. Your mother and sister called for help, and stretched their arms towards me. Their danger was great. The concussion had torn the wooden walls from their hinges, and each moment they threatened to give way and expose the women to the inevitable fall into the abyss, which black, deep, unfathomable, the seat of the black divs, seemed waiting to crush the beautiful victims in its jaws.

"I stood clinging to the stem of the cypress in front of the ruined carriage which hung over the precipice. Then for the first time your sister's entreating glance fell on me. Since that moment I have loved Atossa, but at the time I did not know what passed in my heart, for I could think of nothing but saving them. With eager haste I lifted the trembling women from the carriage, which a minute later gave way and fell crashing into the abyss. I am a strong man, but I had to exert all my strength to keep myself and the two women above the precipice, till ropes were thrown down to me. Atossa clung round my neck, with my left hand I held Cassandane, who leant against

me. With my right hand I wound the rope round my body. We were drawn up, and a few minutes later I stood safe on the road with your mother and sister.

"After a magus had bound up the wound cut by the rope in my side, the king sent for me, gave me this chain, and the revenues of a whole province, and afterwards led me to the women, who warmly expressed their gratitude. Cassandane allowed me to kiss her brow, and gave me all the jewels she wore in the moment of danger, for my future wife. Atossa drew a ring from her finger, and put it on my hand, which with her usual impetuosity she kissed in token of gratitude. After that day, the happiest of my life, I did not see your sister again till yesterday. At the great birthday feast we sat opposite each other. My eye met hers. I saw nothing but Atossa, and know she has not forgotten her preserver. Cassandane—"

"O, my mother would gladly call you her son, I pledge you my word. Your father can appeal to the king. He is our uncle, and may with perfect right demand Cyrus' daughter for his son."

"Do you remember your father's dream? Cambyzes has always looked on me with suspicion on account of that dream."

"That has long been forgotten. My father dreamed before his death that you had received wings, and therefore, deceived by the soothsayers, he feared you, a boy of eighteen, would try to seize the throne. Cambyzes remembered that vision, till you saved our relatives, when Crœsus declared the dream was fulfilled. Only a winged eagle, or Darius, could have hovered over a precipice with such skill and strength."

"Cambyzes was not much pleased with this interpretation. He wants to be the only eagle in Persia, but Crœsus never flattered his pride."

"I wonder where he is all this time?"

"He is in the hanging gardens. Your father and Gobryas are probably detaining him."

"I call that polite!" cried Zopyrus at this moment. "Bartja invites us to a feast, and leaves us to empty our goblets without a host, while he talks secrets!"

"We are coming, we are coming," returned the prince.

Then he seized Darius's hand, pressed it, and said: "Your love for Atossa makes me happy. I shall stay till the day after to-morrow, though the stars threaten me with all the dangers of the world. To-morrow I will sound Atossa's heart; and not till everything is in the right track will I go hence, and leave my winged Darius to reach his goal by his own strength."

With these words Bartja went towards the bower, while his friend looked at the sky. The longer he looked at the stars, the darker became his face. When the Tistar star set, he murmured: "Poor Bartja!" His friends called him, and he was about to return to them, when he noticed a new star, whose position he observed with attention. The gravity of his looks changed to a triumphant smile; his tall figure seemed to grow still taller; he pressed his hand on his heart, and, whispering softly: "Winged Darius, use your pinions, your star will aid you," he returned to his companions.

Soon afterwards Cræsus approached the bower. The youths sprang from their seats to welcome the old man, who stood as though struck by lightning when he recognized Bartja in the bright moonlight.

"What has happened, father?" asked Gyges, anxiously seizing Cræsus' hand.

"Nothing, nothing," he murmured, half inaudibly. Then he pushed his son aside, approached Bartja, and whispered in his ear: "Unhappy boy! You are still here. Do not linger, but fly. The whip-bearers who are to arrest you follow close upon my heels. Believe me, if you do not hasten, you will pay for your double crime with your life."

"But, Cræsus, I—"

"You have laughed to scorn the law of this land and this court; and at least, to judge from appearances, you have injured your brother's honour."

"You speak—"

"Fly, fly, I tell you, for though you went to the Egyptian in the hanging gardens with the most innocent intentions, you have everything to fear. How could you, who know Cambyzes' fury so well, break his express command in this wanton manner?"

"I do not understand—"

"No excuses. Go. You do not know that Cambyzes has long looked on you with jealousy; that your visit to the Egyptian at night—"

"Since Nitetis came here I have not set foot in the hanging gardens."

"Do not add falsehood to crime. I—"

"I swear—"

"Do you wish to turn an indiscretion into a crime by perjury? The whip-bearers are coming; fly, fly!"

"I shall stay, for I keep to my oath."

"Infatuated boy, know that I myself, Hystaspes, and other Achæmenidæ saw you not an hour ago in the hanging gardens!"

In his surprise, Bartja had allowed the old man to lead him away, almost unresisting; but when he heard the last words, he stopped, called his friends, and said: "Cræsus says he saw me less than an hour ago in the hanging gardens, but as you know I have not left you since sunset. Let your testimony confirm that some evil div has deceived our friend and his companions."

"I swear to you, father," cried Gyges, "that Bartja has not left this garden for several hours."

"We swear the same," said Araspes, Darius, and Zopyrus.

"You wish to deceive me," said Cræsus, angrily, and looking from one to the other reproachfully. "Do you think I am blind or mad? Do you think your testimony would outweigh that of noble Hystaspes, Gobryas, Intaphernes, and the chief priest, Oropastes. In spite of your false testimony, which no friendship excuses, Bartja is a dead man if he does not fly."

"Angramainjus, destroy me!" cried old Araspes, interrupting the old man, "if the son of Cyrus was in the hanging gardens two hours ago."

"You need no longer call me your son," added Gyges, "if our testimony is false."

"The eternal stars—" began Darius, when Bartja interrupted the speakers, who were all talking at once, and said, calmly:

"Yonder a division of the bodyguard enters the

gardens. I am to be arrested, and cannot fly because I am innocent, and would thus lay myself open to the suspicion of guilt. By the soul of my father, by the blind eyes of my mother, by the pure light of the sun, I swear, Cræsus, that I am not deceiving you."

"Shall I believe you rather than my own eyes which never deceived me yet? I will, boy, for I love and honour you. Whether you are innocent or guilty, I know not, and do not wish to know; but I know that you must fly, fly quickly. You know Cambyzes. My chariot waits at the gate. Drive the horses till they drop, but go. The soldiers seem to know what is at stake, for they certainly linger so long that you, their favourite, may have time to escape. Hasten, then, or you are lost!"

"Fly, Bartja," cried Darius, urging on his friend. "Remember the warning which heaven itself sent you."

Bartja silently shook his beautiful head, and, signing to his anxious friends to fall back, said: "I have never yet fled, and I mean to stand firm to-day. Cowardice seems to me worse than death; and I would rather suffer injustice from others than disgrace myself. Here are the soldiers. Welcome, Bishen! You come to arrest me? Yes? Wait a minute, till I have bidden my friends farewell."

Bishen, to whom he spoke, an old captain of Cyrus' who had given Bartja his first lessons in shooting with the bow, and throwing the spear, who had fought at his side against the Tapuri, and who loved him as his own son, interrupted the youth and said: "You need not bid your friends farewell, for the king, who is raging like a madman, commanded me to arrest you and all who were with you."

Then he added in a low voice: "The king is beside himself with rage, and threatens your life. You must escape. My people obey me blindly and will not pursue you. I am old, and Persia will lose little if my head falls."

"I thank you, friend," returned Bartja, giving him his hand, "but I cannot accept your sacrifice. I am innocent, and I know that Cambyzes, though passionate, is not unjust. Come, my friends, I think the king will try us to-day."

CHAPTER XIX.

CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

TWO hours later Bartja was standing, with his companions, before the king. The gigantic man sat, pale and hollow-eyed, in his golden chair, behind which his court physicians stood with various vessels and instruments. But a few minutes had elapsed since Cambyzes had recovered consciousness, after he had been for more than an hour the victim of that terrible malady which disorders body and soul, and which we call the falling sickness, or epilepsy.

Since Nitetis' arrival he had been spared by this terrible malady, which in consequence of his wild excitement had now attacked him with unusual violence.

If he had met Bartja a few hours earlier he would have killed him with his own hand. The fit had not subdued his anger, but it had lessened it so far that he could hear accused and accusers.

On the right of the throne stood Hystaspes, Darius' aged father, Gobryas, his future father-in-law, old Intaphernes, the grandfather of that Phædime, who had lost the king's favour because of the Egyptian, the chief priest, Oropastes, Croesus, and behind him Boges, the chief eunuch. On the left were Bartja, his hands heavily fettered, Araspes, Darius, Zopyrus, Gyges. Several hundred dignitaries stood in the background.

After a long silence, Cambyzes raised his eyes, fixed them with a terrible look on the fettered youth, and said in a hollow voice: "Chief priest, say what awaits the man who deceives his brother, dishonours and insults the king, and blackens his heart with dark lies?"

Oropastes advanced and said: "As soon as his guilt is proved he may expect a death of agony in this world, and

a terrible judgment on the bridge Chinvat,¹ for he has sinned against the highest commandments, and by committing three sins he has lost the right to claim the mercy of our laws, which give life to him who has erred but once, though he be only a slave."

"Then Bartja must die. Lead him away, guards, and strangle him. Lead him away. Silence, miserable man! I will not listen again to your hypocritical voice, never again meet your false eye, which deceives all with wanton looks, and owes its origin to the divs. Away, guards!"

Bishen approached to carry out his command, but Croesus advanced at this moment, flung himself on the ground, touched the floor with his forehead, raised his hands and said: "May every day, every year, bring you nothing but happiness. Auramazda send you all that is good, and the Amesha Spenta be the guardians of your throne. Do not shut your ears to the words of age, and remember that your father Cyrus appointed me your counsellor. You are about to murder your brother, but I charge you not to follow the dictates of your wrath, but to seek to control yourself. It is the duty of wise men and kings to examine before they act. Beware of shedding your brother's blood, for know it will rise up to heaven and become a cloud which will darken the days of the murderer and fling a thousand darts of vengeance upon him. But I know you will judge and not murder. Act in accordance with the custom of those who judge, and hear both sides before you pronounce sentence. When you have done this, and when his guilt has been proved and he has confessed, then the blood shed will not darken your existence and, instead of the vengeance of the gods, you will gain the reputation of being a just judge."

Cambyses listened to the old man in silence, signed to Bishen to stand back, and bade Boges repeat his accusations.

The eunuch bowed and began: "I was ill and was,

¹ The third day after death, at sunrise, the souls were led to the bridge Chinvat by the divs, and interrogated as to their life. There the heavenly powers fought for the soul. The good were assisted by pure spirits, and enter heaven as victors. The evil were unaided, and were dragged bound to hell.

therefore, obliged to resign the care of the Egyptian to my companion, Candaules, who has paid for his negligence with his life. Towards evening I felt better and entered the gardens to see if all were in order, and to look at the rare flower which was to blossom this night. The king, may Auramazda grant him victory, had commanded that the Egyptian should be more strictly guarded than usual, because she had dared to address a letter to noble Bartja—”

“Silence,” interrupted the king, “keep to the point.”

“Just as the Tistar star rose, I reached the gardens and stayed for a while with these noble Achæmenidæ, the chief priest and king Cræsus, by the blue lily, which was truly of extraordinary beauty. Then I called my comrade, Candaules, and asked, in the presence of these noble witnesses, whether everything was in order. He answered affirmatively, and added that he had just come from the Egyptian, who had wept the whole day and touched neither food nor drink. I felt anxious as to my mistress’s health, bade Candaules fetch a physician, and was about to leave the noble Achæmenidæ in order to convince myself of the condition of the princess, when I saw a man’s figure in the moonlight. I was so weak and ill that I could scarcely stand, and had no assistance near save the gardener. My subordinates kept guard at the entrance, a good way off. I clapped my hands to summon some of them and as they did not come, I approached the house, protected by these noble men. The man stood in front of the Egyptian’s window and whistled softly. Immediately a second figure, distinctly visible in the clear moonlight, sprang from the window of the Egyptian’s bedroom into the garden, and came towards us with his companion. I thought my eyes deceived me when I recognized noble Bartja in the intruder. A fig-tree hid us from the fugitives, but we could see them quite distinctly when they passed four paces from us. While I was considering whether I had a right to arrest a son of Cyrus, Cræsus called to Bartja. Both men vanished suddenly behind a cypress. We followed, and for a long time searched in vain for those who had so mysteriously escaped. Your brother will be able to explain his strange disappearance. When I searched the house directly after

the Egyptian was lying unconscious on the divan in her bedroom."

All present listened anxiously. Cambyzes ground his teeth, and asked in an excited voice:

"Can you confirm the eunuch's testimony?"

"Yes."

"Why did you not arrest the guilty man?"

"We are warriors, not constables."

"Or rather you love that boy better than your king."

"We honour you and loathe the criminal Bartja as much as we loved Cyrus' innocent son."

"Did you actually recognize Bartja?"

"Yes."

"You, too, Cræsus, cannot deny this?"

"No. I thought I saw your brother in the moonlight as distinctly as I see you, but I believe some wonderful likeness must have deceived us."

Boges turned pale at these words, but Cambyzes shook his head disapprovingly, and said: "Whom may I believe, if the eyes of my best heroes are deceived? Who would like to be judge if testimony like yours has no value?"

"Other evidence as credible as ours will prove to you that we must have been mistaken."

"Who dares bear witness for this guilty man?" cried Cambyzes, springing up, and stamping.

"We, we, we," cried Araspes, Darius, Gyges, and Zopyrus, unanimously.

"Traitors, villains," cried the king. But his eye met Cræsus' warning look, and he lowered his voice, and said: "What have you to say in favour of this criminal? Think well before you speak, and remember the punishment that awaits false witnesses."

"We do not need this warning," said Araspes; "but we can swear that we have not left Bartja and his garden for a minute since we returned from the chase."

"And," added Darius, "I, the son of Hystaspes, can prove most clearly your brother's innocence, for with him I observed the Tistar star which, according to Boges, is said to have shone on his flight."

Hystaspes, at these words, seemed surprised, and looked questioningly at his son; Cambyzes gazed searchingly, and

with indecision, now at one and now at the other party of witnesses who were used to believe each other, and yet could not do so now.

Bartja, who till then had remained silent, and looked mournfully on the chains which bound his hands, seized the opportunity while all were silent, and said, bowing low: "Will you allow me to say a few words, my king?"

"Speak!"

"Our father taught us by his example to aim at what is good and pure alone, therefore, till now, my life was blameless. If you can accuse me of a wrong act do not believe me, but if you find no fault in me, trust my words, and remember that a son of Cyrus would rather perish than lie. I acknowledge, no judge was ever placed in a more difficult position than you. The best men of your land bear witness against the best, friend against friend, father against son. But I tell you, if all Persia raised its hand against you, and swore Cambyes did this or that, and you declared: "I did not do it," then I, Bartja, would accuse all Persia of falsehood, and would cry: 'You are false witnesses, for the sea will throw out fire before the mouth of a son of Cyrus will lie.' We are both so high in rank, that you alone can bear witness against me, you alone against yourself." At these words, Cambyes looked less angrily at his brother, who continued: "I swear that I am innocent, by Mithra and all pure spirits. If since my return I have entered the hanging gardens, if my tongue lies, let my life be forfeited, and my race perish."

Bartja swore with such firm conviction in his voice, that Cambyes ordered his chains to be removed. Then he said, after reflecting for a minute: "I will believe you, for I cannot look on you as the most abandoned of men. Tomorrow we will ask the astrologers, prophets, and priests. Perhaps they can explain the truth. Do you see light in the darkness, Oropastes?"

"Your servant thinks a div must have taken Bartja's form to ruin your brother, and stain your royal soul with the blood of your father's son."

Cambyes and all present nodded approvingly. Cambyes was just about to give his brother his hand, when a staff-bearer entered, and handed the king a dagger. A

eunuch had found it under the window of Nitetis' bedroom. Cambyzes looked keenly at the weapon, the valuable hilt of which was encrusted with rubies and turquoises, turned pale, and suddenly flung the dagger at Bartja's feet with such violence, that the jewels sprang out of their setting.

"It is your dagger, miserable boy," he cried, passionately. "This morning you used it to deal the final blow to the boar I slew. You must know it, Cræsus, for my father took it from your treasure-chamber at Sardes. Now your guilt is proved, you liar and deceiver! The divs need no weapons, and knives like this are not found everywhere. You feel in your girdle, you turn pale, the knife is not there!"

"It is gone. I must have lost it, or an enemy—"

"Bind him, chain him, Bishen. Take the traitor and the false witnesses to prison. To-morrow they shall be strangled. Death is the punishment for perjury. If they escape, the heads of the guards will fall. I will not hear a word. Away, perjured knaves! Hurry to the hanging gardens, Hogen, and bring the Egyptian. But, no, I will not see the serpent again. The morning will soon dawn. At noon the traitress shall be whipped through the town, then I—"

The king could not continue, for he was seized by another fit, and fell on the marble floor of the hall.

During this horrible scene, Cassandane entered, led by the old general, Megabyzus. The news of what had happened had reached her secluded rooms. In spite of the lateness of the hour, she set forth to find out the truth, and bid her son beware of premature haste. She believed firmly in the innocence of Bartja and Nitetis, though she could not explain what had happened. Several times she had tried to communicate with the Egyptian, but in vain; the guard had even had the boldness to refuse her admission when she came herself.

Cræsus hastened towards her, told her as considerably as he could what had happened, strengthened her belief in the innocence of the accused, and led her to her son, the king.

The paroxysms had not lasted long this time. Exhausted and pale, Cambyzes lay on his golden couch under coverings

of purple silk. His mother sat by him. At the foot of the bed stood Cræsus, and in the background the court physicians consulted in whispers as to the king's condition.

Cassandane gently bade her son beware of passionate outbreaks, and consider what sad effects every outburst of anger might have on his health.

"You are right, mother," answered the king, smiling bitterly. "It will be necessary for me to clear all that arouses my anger out of my way. The Egyptian shall die, and my treacherous brother follow his adulterous love."

Cassandane exerted all her eloquence in favour of the accused, and strove to calm the wrath of the king; but neither entreaties, tears, nor motherly admonitions were able to alter Cambyzes' resolution to rid himself of the destroyers of his happiness and peace.

At last Cambyzes interrupted the lamentations of his aged mother, and said: "I feel utterly exhausted, and can no longer listen to your sobs and lamentations. Nitetis' guilt is proved; a man left her room at midnight; and this man was no other than the handsomest of the Persians, to whom she yesterday dared to send a letter."

"Do you know the contents of this letter?" asked Cræsus, approaching the bed.

"No, it was written in Greek. The faithless woman chose for her criminal message, characters which no one at the court can understand."

"Will you allow me to translate this letter to you?"

Cambyzes pointed with his hand to a little ivory box in which the fatal letter lay, and said: "Take it, and read it, but do not conceal a word. To-morrow I will have it read again by one of the merchants of Sinope who are in Babylon."

Cræsus took a deep breath, and with renewed hope, took the letter in his hand. When he had read it, his eyes filled with tears, and he murmured: "The legend of Pandora is true, I can no longer be angry with the poets who abuse women. All, all are false and faithless. O, Cassandane, how treacherous are the gods! They bestow age on us, but only to strip us, like the trees which lose their leaves when winter approaches, and to show us that all that

we took for gold is copper, and that the thing from which we hoped for refreshment is poison."

Cassandane wept aloud, and rent her costly garments, but Cambyzes clenched his fist when Croesus read the following words with deep emotion:—

"Nitetis, daughter of Amasis of Egypt, to Bartja, son of great Cyrus.

"I have something important to tell you, and you alone. I hope to see you to-morrow at your mother's. It is in your power to comfort a poor loving heart, and to grant it a happy moment before it perishes. I have many sad things to tell you, and repeat that I must see you soon."

The despairing laugh of her son pierced the mother's heart. She leant over him to kiss him, but Cambyzes resisted her embraces, and said: "It is a doubtful honour to be one of your favourites. Bartja did not let the traitress call him twice, and dishonoured himself with false oaths. His friends, the flower of our youth, have for his sake covered themselves with perpetual shame, and through him your favourite daughter is——; but, no, Bartja is not to blame for the perfidy of this monster, who wears the form of a peri. Her life consisted of hypocrisy, lies, and deceit; her death will show you that I understand how to punish. Leave me now, I must be alone."

Cambyzes was no sooner alone than he sprang up, and paced up and down the room, till the holy bird, Parôdar, announced the day. When the sun rose, he again lay down on the bed, and sank into a stuporlike sleep.

During these events the young prisoners and old Araspes sat drinking together after Bartja had dictated to Gyges a farewell letter to Sappho.

"Let us be cheerful," cried Zopyrus, "for I think our joys will soon be over. May I live no longer if we are not one and all dead to-morrow morning. Pity that we mortals have but one neck. If we had two, I would bet more than one piece of gold in favour of our lives."

"Zopyrus is right," added Araspes. "We will be gay, and keep our eyes open, for they will soon enough close for ever."

"He who dies innocent, as we do, has no cause for grief," said Gyges.

"Ho, Bartja and Darius," cried Zopyrus to his friends, who were talking together in a low voice, "have you more secrets? Come to us, and drink your wine. By Mithra! I never wished for death; but to-day I look forward to black Azis,¹ for he will carry us off together. Zopyrus would rather die with his friends than live without them."

"First of all," said Darius, joining his friends with Bartja, "we must try and explain what has happened."

"It's all the same to me," cried Zopyrus, "whether I die with or without explanation, if only I know that I am innocent, and have not deserved the death of a false witness. Bring golden goblets, Bishen; wine does not please me in these common bronze cups. Cambyzes may forbid our fathers and friends to come to us, but he cannot wish that we should suffer privation in our last hours."

"Not the common metal of the vessel, but the worm-wood of death, embitters the draught," said Bartja.

"No, indeed," cried Zopyrus. "I had already forgotten that strangling kills." With these words, he touched Gyges, and whispered: "Be cheerful. Do you not see that Bartja finds it hard to quit the earth? What do you say, Darius?"

"I think it must be as Oropastes imagined, and that an evil div took Bartja's form, and went to the Egyptian to ruin us."

"Folly! I do not believe in such things."

"Do you not remember the legend of King Kavus, to whom a div appeared in the beautiful form of a singer?"

"Certainly," cried Araspes. "Cyrus had the legend sung so often at his banquets, that I know it by heart. Do you wish to hear it?"

"Yes, we will listen with pleasure," cried the youths. Araspes considered a minute, then he began, half reciting, half singing:

"When Kavus in his father's stead held sway,
And all the world was subject to his sway,

¹ An evil spirit who killed human beings. Vendid, xviii. 45.

When all mankind trembled before his eye,
 When round him he saw stores of treasures lie,
 Saw strings of fairest pearls and chains and thrones,
 And glittering jewels and gems and golden crowns,
 The noble steeds, shapely and strong of limb,
 He deemed that there was none could equal him.
 In a rose bower with gold adornments gay,
 Quaffing the grape's sweet juice he sat one day.

"Meanwhile a div unto a courtier went,
 Disguised in minstrel garb, and craved consent
 For audience with the Shah. Thus he began :
 'I am a minstrel from Masenderan,
 And if the Shah desires my song to hear,
 Let him command me that I now draw near.'

"That he should enter, Kavus gave command :
 'Let him among my host of minstrels stand.'
 Then struck the div his strings and thus began
 In praise of beautiful Masenderan."

"Do you wish to hear the song of Masenderan?"

"Yes; go on."

"Praise on my land Masenderan bestow,
 May fortune to its meads her fair smiles show,
 Where in the gardens roses ever bloom,
 Tulip, anemone on the hillside bloom,
 The fields are ever green, and pure the air,
 Nor heat nor frost may banish springtime there;
 Within the wood the nightingale still sings,
 And on the mountain side the glad doe springs,
 And from her nimble course seeks no repose;
 There all is filled with scent, with colour glows.
 Rosewater there the beds of rivers fills,
 And its sweet scent into the soul distils.
 In Bahman, Ader, Ferwerdin, and Di,¹
 The tulips blossom, there they never die,
 The river banks are green the whole year round,
 The falcons ready for the chase are found;
 Far as the land extends, there far and wide
 Are gold and silk and jewels on every side.
 The priests are crowned with diadems of gold,
 The nobles all have girdles edged with gold.
 If any is denied admission there,
 The greatest happiness is not his share."²

¹ May, March, July, April.

² From Ferdusi's *Epic of Kings*. Ferdusi was born A.D. 940, and celebrated the most ancient Persian history in his fine epic. Kai Kavus belonged to the family of the Kajanidæ, who, if they are not purely

"And Kai Kavus listened to the words of the div in the form of a singer; and went to Masenderan, and there he was defeated by the divs, and robbed of his eyesight."

"But," interrupted Darius, "the great hero, Rustem, came and killed Erscheng and the other evil spirits, freed the king, and restored the blind men's sight by rubbing the blood of the slain divs on their eyes. So it will be with us, my friends. We, the prisoners, will be freed, and Cambyzes and our deluded fathers will have their eyes opened, and acknowledge our innocence. Listen, Bishen! If we are killed, go to the magi, the Chaldeans, and the Egyptian Nebenchari, and tell them no longer to study the stars, for they had proved to Darius that they were liars and deceivers."

"I always said," interrupted Araspes, "that only dreams can prophesy. Before Abradat fell in the battle at Sardes, the incomparable Panthea saw him in a dream pierced by a Lydian arrow."

"Cruel man," cried Zopyrus, "must you remind us that it is better to die on the battle-field than with a bowstring round your neck?"

"You are right," said the old man. "I have seen many a death that seemed preferable to ours—even to life itself. Oh, children, there was a time which was better than the present."

"Tell us of those days."

"Tell us, rather, why you never married. In another world it will not hurt you if we betray your secret."

"I have no secret, for your fathers could tell you what you wish to know. Listen, then."

"When I was young, I trifled with women, and scoffed at love. Chance willed that Panthea, the loveliest of her sex, fell into Cyrus' hands. As I boasted that my heart was invulnerable, Cyrus made me her guardian. I saw her daily, and, my friends, I learnt that love is stronger than our will. She repulsed my suit, and induced Cyrus to remove me from her, and to make her husband, Abradat, his

legendary characters, reigned before the Achæmenidæ. We have introduced the poem of a poet who lived so long after the time of our story, because his songs keep close to ancient Persian traditions, and are truly Persian in character.

ally. When they went to war, the noble woman decked her husband with all her jewels, and told him that he could only repay the virtue of Cyrus, who had treated her, his prisoner, like a sister, by the most devoted friendship and heroic courage. Abradat agreed with his wife, fought like a lion, and fell. Panthea killed herself beside his body. When her servants heard this, they too, killed themselves at the grave of the fairest of mistresses. Cyrus mourned the noble pair, and had a monument raised to them, which you can still see at Sardes. On it are the simple words: 'To Panthea, Abradat, and the most faithful of servants.' You see, children, he who loved such a woman cannot think of another."

The young heroes listened in silence to the old man, and long after he had ended they sat without speaking. At last Bartja raised his hands to heaven, and cried: "Oh, mighty Auramazda! why do you not let me end like Abradat? why must we die a shameful death like murderers?"

At this moment Cræsus, accompanied by whip-bearers, entered the hall, with bound hands. The friends hastened to meet him, and overwhelmed him with questions. Gyges threw himself on his father's breast. Bartja approached the guide of his youth with open arms.

The old man's cheerful face was stern and grave. His eyes, usually so gentle, were gloomy—almost threatening. He motioned back the prince with a cold, commanding gesture; and said in a trembling, reproachful voice, full of grief: "Let go my hand, deluded boy; you are not worth the love I gave you till this day. Four times faithless, you have deceived your brother, deceived your friends, betrayed the poor child who waits for you in Naucratis, and poisoned the heart of Amasis' unhappy daughter."

At first Bartja listened quietly; but when Cræsus uttered the word "deceived," he clenched his fists, stamped wildly, and cried: "Your years, your weakness, and the gratitude I owe you, protect you, old man, else these words of scorn had been your last!"

Cræsus listened calmly to this explosion of just anger, and said: "You and Cambyzes come of the same stock; your foolish anger proves that. It would be more seemly

if you repented of your crimes, and begged me, your teacher and friend, to forgive you, instead of adding ingratitude to your other shameful crimes."

These words calmed the anger of the insulted youth. His clenched hands sank powerless to his side, and his face turned deadly pale.

These apparent signs of repentance softened the old man's indignation. His love was strong enough to cling to Bartja, guilty or innocent. He seized his right hand in both his own and asked him, as a father might speak to his son whom he met wounded in the battle-field: "Confess, poor misguided boy, how it was possible that your pure heart so quickly fell a prey to evil?"

Bartja listened to these words with horror. The colour returned to his face, but his heart was filled with bitter woe. For the first time his faith in the justice of the gods forsook him. He called himself the victim of a cruel, inexorable destiny. He felt what the innocent, hunted animal must feel when it falls and hears the approaching dogs and hunters. His tender, child-like nature did not know how to bear the first serious attacks of destiny. His body and courage had been steeled against mortal enemies, but his tutors had taught him, as little as his brother, how to ward off the misfortunes of fate. Cambyzes and Bartja seemed intended to drain only the cup of joy and happiness.

Zopyrus could not bear to see his friend's tears. He angrily reproached the old man for his injustice. Gyges looked entreatingly at his father. Araspes placed himself between the reproachful man and the offended youth. Darius, after having for a time calmly observed them, approached Cræsus and said: "You insult and hurt each other while the accused does not know what he is accused of, and the judge does not listen to his defence. I intreat you, Cræsus, for the sake of the friendship which united us till to-day, to tell us what induced you to judge Bartja so severely, when a short time ago you believed in his innocence."

The old man acceded to this request, and told them that he had read a letter in the Egyptian's own writing, in which she asked the youth for a private interview. His

own eyes, the evidence of the first men of the realm, even the dagger found before the house had not been able to convince him of his favourite's guilt, but the letter had entered his heart like a torch and destroyed the remains of his belief in the faith and purity of woman.

"I left the king," he concluded, "firmly convinced that there was a criminal understanding between your friend and the Egyptian, whose heart I had looked on till then as a mirror of all that is good and beautiful. Can you wonder that I blame him who so shamefully stained this pure soul and the equally stainless purity of his own soul?"

"How shall I prove my innocence to you?" cried Bartja, wringing his hands. "If you loved me you would believe my words; if you cared for me—"

"My son, to save your life I forfeited mine but a few minutes ago. When I learned that Cambyzes had really ordered your execution, I hastened to him, overwhelmed him with entreaties, and when my prayers were unavailing, I dared to reproach the irritated man bitterly. Then his scanty stock of patience was exhausted. He raged and bade the guards behead me. The chief whip-bearer arrested me, but spared my life till to-morrow. He is indebted to me, and will be able to conceal the delay of the execution. I am glad that I need not survive you, my sons, and I will die innocent with you the guilty."

These words aroused a new storm of contradiction. Darius again remained calm and moderate among the general confusion. He repeated the history of the evening, and proved the impossibility of Bartja's guilt. Then he desired Bartja to speak. The youth rejected briefly every idea of an understanding with Nitetis, and confirmed his words with so solemn an oath that Cræsus' belief first wavered, and finally began to yield. When Bartja had finished, he embraced him, and breathed more freely, as though a heavy load had been taken from him.

Though the friends strove to explain what had happened they found their efforts unavailing. All were firmly convinced that Nitetis loved Bartja, and had written the letter to him with evil intentions.

"Whoever," cried Darius, "saw her when Cambyzes told his friends that Bartja had chosen a wife cannot

doubt her passion for him. When she dropped the cup I heard Phædime's father say, the Egyptian women seemed to feel great sympathy for the love affairs of their brothers-in-law."

During this conversation the sun rose and shone brightly into the prisoners' apartment.

"Mithra wants to make our parting hard," murmured Bartja.

"No," returned Cræsus, "he is only lighting our way to eternity."

CHAPTER XX.

BOGES TRIUMPHANT.

NITETIS, the innocent cause of all these melancholy complications, had spent sad hours since the king's birthday feast. After those harsh words with which Cambyzes dismissed the poor girl when her inexplicable behaviour had awakened his jealousy, she had not received the least news of her angry lover, nor had his mother or sister come to her. She had spent every day since she came to Babylon with Cassandane and Atossa. When she wished to be taken to them to explain her strange conduct, Candaules roughly forbade her to leave the house. She thought that a voluntary recital of what she had heard in her last letter from home would remove all misunderstanding. She already saw Cambyzes regretting his violence and his foolish jealousy, and stretching out his hand in quest of forgiveness. At last her heart was filled with joy when she thought of something she had once heard Ibycus say: "As a fever attacks a strong man with greater force than a weak one, so jealousy brings greater torments to a heart full of strong passion, than to one which loves superficially."

If the great judge of love was right, Cambyzes, whose jealousy had broken out with such sudden and terrible force, must have felt a strong passion for her. Mingled with this belief were sad thoughts of home and gloomy forebodings, which she could not banish from her heart. When the noonday sun burned hot in the sky, and she still had no news of those she loved, she was seized with a feverish restlessness which increased as night approached. When it was dark, Boges came to her, and told her, with bitter scorn, that Cambyzes had her letter to Bartja in his possession,

and had given orders that the messenger who was to convey it should be executed. The tortured nerves of the princess were unable to bear this heavy blow. Before Boges left her he carried her fainting to her bedroom, and bolted the door carefully.

A few minutes later, two men, a youth and an old man, came through the trap-door which Boges had carefully examined two days before. The old man stopped close against the wall of the house, while the youth, in obedience to a signal from a window, sprang into the room. Words of love, and the names Gaumata and Mandane were whispered softly, and vows were exchanged. At last the old man clapped his hands. The youth at once obeyed the signal, embraced Nitetis' maid once more, sprang through the window into the garden, hurried past the admirers of the blue lily, who were approaching, slipped with his companion through the trap-door, closed it carefully, and vanished.

Mandane hastened to the room where her mistress usually spent the evening. She was acquainted with her habits, and knew that she was accustomed to sit every evening when the stars rose, by the window facing the Euphrates, and to gaze for hours at the river and the plain without summoning her servants. She had therefore no reason to fear discovery from this side, and could quietly await her lover, conscious of the protection of the chief eunuch.

She had scarcely found her mistress, when the gardens filled with people, and she heard confused voices of men and eunuchs, and trumpets sounding to summon the warders. At first she trembled at the thought that her lover might have been discovered; but when Boges appeared, and whispered to her: "He has escaped," she ordered the servants who entered hastily from the women's rooms, whither she had banished them on account of her meeting, to carry their mistress to her bedroom, and made every effort to restore her to consciousness. Nitetis had scarcely opened her eyes, when Boges entered, followed by two eunuchs, whom he commanded to load the delicate arms of the maiden with chains.

Nitetis, incapable of speaking, suffered everything in silence. She would not even answer when Boges called to

her, before he left the house: "May you like your cage, my imprisoned bird. The king is now being told that a marten has been enjoying himself in his dovecot. Farewell, and think of poor tormented Boges, when the damp earth cools you in this dreadful heat. Yes, my pigeon, in death we know our true friends, and so I will not let them bury you in a sack of coarse linen, but in a cloth of fine silk. Farewell, my darling."

Nitetis trembled at his words, and when Boges had gone, she asked Mandane for an explanation of what had taken place. The maid followed the eunuch's advice, and told her that Bartja had entered the gardens secretly, and had been seen by several Achæmenidæ in the act of entering a window. Cambyzes had been told of his brother's treachery, and the worst was to be feared from the king's jealousy. The thoughtless girl shed many tears of bitter repentance during her story, which comforted her mistress, who thought they were signs of true love and sympathy.

When Mandane ceased speaking, Nitetis looked down on her chains with despair, and a long time elapsed before she grasped the horror of her situation. Then she re-read her letter from home, wrote the words: "I am innocent," and bade her sobbing servant give both to the king's mother after her death; she did not sleep all night. In her ointment-box was a preparation for beautifying the skin, which she knew caused death if taken in sufficient quantity. She had this poison brought her, and resolved with calm deliberation to kill herself when the executioner approached. From that instant she looked forward to her last hour, and said to herself: "True he kills you, but he kills you because he loves you." Then she thought of writing him a letter, in which she would confess to him the whole depth of her passion. He was not to receive this letter till after her death, so that he should not think she had written it to save her life. The hope that the strong, inflexible man might perhaps drop tears on the letter, filled her whole soul with pain and joy. In spite of her heavy chains she therefore wrote the following words: "Cambyzes will receive this letter when I am dead. It is to tell my lord that I love him better than the gods, than the

world, than even my own young life. Cassandane and Atossa must think kindly of me. My mother's letter will show them that I am innocent, and that I merely wished to see Bartja for the sake of my poor sister. Boges tells me my death is decreed. When the executioner approaches I shall end my life. I am sinning against myself to prevent you, Cambyzes, from committing a wicked deed."

She gave this letter and that of her mother to weeping Mandane, and asked her to give it to Cambyzes after her death.

Then she threw herself on her knees, and prayed to the gods of her home, asking forgiveness for her apostasy. When Mandane advised her to think of her weakness, and to lie down, she replied: "I need not sleep. I have but a short time left to wake in."

While she prayed and sang Egyptian hymns, her heart turned with renewed fervour to the gods of her home whom she had renounced after so short a time. Nearly all the prayers she knew referred to life after death. In Osiris' realm in the Nether World, where the twelve judges of the dead would decide on the merit of the soul, after it had been tried in the balance by the goddess of truth and the scribe of heaven, Thoth, she might hope to see her beloved ones again, if her body, the bearer of the soul, could be preserved,¹ unless her soul could not justify itself, and was obliged to begin its wanderings through the bodies of animals. This "if" filled her with feverish anxiety. Since her childhood the doctrine that the weal of the soul was connected with the preservation of the body which remained behind, had been impressed on her. She believed in the dream which had raised the pyramids and hollowed out rocks, and she trembled when she thought that, according

¹ The dead received the use of all their limbs in the Nether World, if they were preserved. Whatever was wanting to the body was wanting to its copy, the shadow. The immortal soul of the Egyptian went after his death to the Nether World, either to be justified, to become part of the world soul in Osiris, and to enjoy bliss in the pure light of the east, to sow well-watered fields in Anlu or Alu, and to reap without trouble; or else after horrible tortures to be driven out of the Nether World and begin its wanderings through the bodies of animals. After these journeys either it was allowed to unite with Osiris, or else it had to begin the path of purification anew.

to Persian custom, her body would be given up to dogs, birds of prey, and other destroying forces, and the soul thus deprived of every hope of a future life. Then the thought struck her that she would again be false to her former gods, and would kneel to the new spirits of life. They gave the dead body back to the elements of which it consisted, and only judged the soul of the deceased. When she was about to raise her hands to the great sun which had just vanquished the mists of the Euphrates valley with its golden rays, when she was about to praise Mithra in recently learnt hymns, her voice failed her, and she saw in the star of day not Mithra, but great Ra, the god whom she had so often praised in Egypt. Instead of the hymns of the magi, she sang the song with which Egyptian priests were wont to greet the morning sun:—

“Bend low before the greatest of all gods,
The child of heaven, bow to lofty Ra,
Who by his own strength generates himself,
Whom every morn beholdeth born anew.
Honour to thee who o’er the heavenly ocean
Takest thy way, granting fertility.
Thou hast created all things that exist,
As far as stretches the great vault of heaven,
Thou art the guardian whose mild gentle ray
Brings precious life to all whose hearts are pure.
Honour to thee. When through the heavenly vale
Thou takest through blue fields thy path of light,
Then all the gods tremble at thy approach
With sweet delight, thou child of heaven, Ra!”¹

This song gave her perfect comfort. She thought of her childhood, as with tearful eyes she gazed at the new light whose rays did not yet dazzle her eyes. Then she looked down on the plains. There flowed the Euphrates, with yellow tinged waves, like the Nile. Numerous villages peeped out from the luxuriant fields and fig-bushes, as in her home. Towards the west, the royal park extended for miles with tall cypresses and nut trees. The morning dew gleamed on every leaf and blade; and in the bushes of the garden where she dwelt innumerable birds raised their melodious voices. Now and then a soft breeze arose, wafted sweet rose scent towards her, and played in the tops of

¹ From an inscription on a tomb in the Berlin Museum.

the slender, graceful palms which grew in great numbers on the banks of the stream, and in all the fields around. She had often admired these beautiful trees, and likened them to dancers, when the storm caught their heavy tops, and swayed their slender stems to and fro. How often she had told herself that here must be the home of the Phoenix, the bird from the land of the palms, who, according to the priests, came every five hundred years to the temple of Ra in Heliopolis, where he burnt himself in sacred flames of incense, only to arise more beautiful than ever from his ashes, and after three days to return to his eastern home. While she thought of this bird, and longed to rise like him from the ashes of misfortune to new and more beautiful happiness, a great bird with shining plumage flew up from the cypress which hid the house of him whom she loved, and who had made her so unhappy, swung himself high up into the air, and settled at last on a palm close by her window. She had never seen a bird like this before; and it could be no common bird, for a golden chain hung from his feet, and his tail was not of feathers, but, as she thought, of sunbeams. It must be Bennu,¹ the bird of Ra. She sank devoutly on her knees again, and sang the ancient Phoenix song, while she kept her eyes fixed on the gleaming inhabitant of the air:—

“Far over the heads of mortals on high
My swift pinions bear me through the sky
The mighty creator created me,
In my splendour his image all may see.
I am as lovely and fair to behold
As flowers that blossom in field and wold,
In the brightest of light my brightness is shown,
But my nature is secret, it may not be known,
For I know what will be and what has passed by,
Of Ra the immortal soul am I.”²

The bird listened to the song with a bright, inquisitive look, while he jerked his tiny head, ornamented with flowing feathers, from side to side. When it was finished, he flew away. Nitetis looked with glad eyes after the supposed Phoenix, a bird of paradise, which had broken the

¹ The ancient Egyptian name for the phoenix.

² From the 83rd chapter of the Book of the Dead.

chain that confined him in the park. A strange conviction that she would be saved filled her heart, for she thought god Ra had sent her the bird, whose form she was to assume as a blessed spirit. As long as we wish and hope, we can bear many misfortunes; if happiness does not come, expectation lingers, and with it the sweetness which belongs to it. This mood suffices, and contains a kind of enjoyment which can take the place of reality.

Nitetis lay down exhausted on a divan, and against her will fell into a deep, dreamless sleep, without having touched the poison.

The rising sun brings comfort to those unhappy beings who have passed the night in weeping, while the pure light is an unwelcome apparition to guilty souls who seek darkness. While Nitetis slept, Mandane watched, tormented by frightful pangs of conscience. How gladly she would have kept back the sun, which was to herald the death of her most gracious mistress, through her fault, and she would have liked to live henceforth in perpetual night, if she had thus been able to recall yesterday's deed.

The kind, but thoughtless girl repeatedly called herself a shameful murderess. A hundred times she resolved to confess all, and save Nitetis; but each time fear and love of life conquered the good impulse of her heart. She was certain of death if she confessed, and she felt so fit to live; she shuddered at the thought of the grave; she hoped so much from the future. If she had anticipated perpetual imprisonment, she would, perhaps, have revealed the whole truth; but she could not die, and would a confession save the condemned? Had she not herself been commissioned to send Bartja a message through the hapless gardener? This mysterious correspondence had been discovered. Nitetis would, therefore, probably have been lost without her assistance. We are never cleverer than when we want to excuse to ourselves a fault we have committed.

When the sun rose, Mandane knelt, weeping, by her mistress' couch. She wept bitterly, and could not understand how Nitetis could sleep so peacefully.

Boges, the eunuch, had also passed a sleepless night. His representative and fellow-official, Candaules, whom he hated, had been executed by the king's commands,

for his negligence and probable corruption. Nitetis was not only overthrown, to rise again at a future time, but she was condemned to a shameful death, which would make her harmless for ever. The influence of the king's mother had been rudely shaken, and, to conclude, he was flattered by the consciousness of his own superiority, and the skilful manner in which he had executed his difficult task, as much as by the hope that he would soon see his favourite, Phædime, once more the special favourite of the king. The sentence of death pronounced against Cræsus and the young heroes was also opportune, for, if they lived, it was not unlikely that his intrigues might be discovered.

It was dawn when he left the king's chamber to go to Phædime. The proud Persian had not gone to rest. She awaited the eunuch with feverish impatience, for rumours of what had happened had already reached the harem.

She lay on the purple divan of her dressing-room, clad in a light silk garment, and yellow slippers covered with turquoises and pearls, and surrounded by twenty servants. As soon as she heard Boges approach, she sent away the slaves, sprang up, ran towards him, and overwhelmed him with a flood of disconnected questions, referring to her enemy, Nitetis.

"Gently, my dove," said Boges, laying his fleshy hand on her shoulder. "Gently. If you cannot force yourself to listen to my report in perfect silence, without asking questions, you shall not hear a single word to-day. Yes, my golden queen, I have so much to tell you that it would take me till to-morrow, if you interrupted me when you pleased. Ah, my lamb, I have still much to do to-day. First, I must be present at an Egyptian's donkey-ride; secondly, at an Egyptian's execution. But I anticipate, and will begin from the beginning. You may weep, laugh, cry, as much as you like, with joy; but you are forbidden to question me till I have finished. I have, indeed, deserved these embraces. There, now, I am comfortable, and can begin. There was once a great king in Persia who had many wives, of whom he loved and distinguished Phædime most of all. Then one day it pleased him to woo

the daughter of Amasis of Egypt. He, therefore, sent a great embassy, with his own brother as suitor, to Sais."

"Nonsense," cried Phædime, impatiently; "I want to know what has happened to-day."

"Patience, patience, impetuous wind of Ader! If you interrupt me again, I shall go and tell my story to the trees. Do not grudge me the pleasure of living through my success again. While I tell it, I feel as happy as a sculptor who has put his chisel away, and looks at the work he has just completed—"

"No, no," cried Phædime again; "I cannot listen now to what I knew long ago. I shall die with impatience. I have waited for hours in feverish restlessness. Every new rumour that the servants and eunuchs hastened to bring me has increased my impatience. I am in a fever, and cannot wait longer. Ask of me what you will, but free me from this dreadful anxiety. Afterwards, if you like, I will listen to you for days."

Boges smiled contentedly and said, rubbing his hands: "Already as a child, I knew no greater pleasure than to watch a fish dangling on the hook. Now you, the loveliest of golden carp, hang on my line, and I cannot let you go till I have enjoyed your impatience."

Phædime sprang up from the couch which, till then, she had shared with the eunuch, stamped her feet, and behaved like a naughty child. This behaviour seemed to please the eunuch greatly, for he rubbed his hands more gaily, laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks, and emptied several cups of wine to the health of the irritated beauty before he began his narrative.

"It had not escaped me that Cambyses sent his brother Bartja, who had brought the Egyptian hither, against the Tapuri from motives of jealousy alone. The proud woman, whom I was not to command, seemed to care as little for the beautiful, fair-haired youth as a Jew for pork, or an Egyptian for beans,¹ but I resolved to increase the king's jealousy, and thus make the insolent woman harmless, who seemed to succeed in ousting us from the king's favour. I long sought in vain for a suitable plan.

¹ The Egyptians were forbidden to eat beans.

“When at last the New Year’s feast arrived, all the priests of the realm assembled at Babylon. For eight days the town was full of joy, feasting, and drinking. At court, too, there was high festival, and I had little time to think of my plan. Then the gracious Amesha Spenta sent me, just when I least hoped for success, a youth whom Angramainjus himself seemed to have created for my plans. Gaumata, brother of Oropastes, came to Babylon to be present at the great New Year’s festival. When I saw the youth for the first time at his brother’s house, whither the king had sent me, I thought I saw a ghost, for he is the image of Bartja. After I had finished my business with Oropastes, the boy accompanied me to my carriage. I did not show my astonishment, overwhelmed him with kindness, and asked him to visit me. He came the same evening. I had the best wine brought, forced him to drink, and again found that the best quality of the grape-juice is its power to make even the most silent gossip. The youth informed me, when he was excited by the wine, that he had not come to Babylon for the sacrifice alone, but for the sake of a girl who was the chief servant of the Egyptian. He had loved her, he told me, from childhood, but his ambitious brother had higher aims for him, and in order to part him from fair Mandane, he had obtained for her a situation about the person of the king’s new wife. Finally, he begged me to arrange an interview between him and his love. I listened kindly, but suggested difficulties, and finally asked him to come to me again the next day. He came. I said that something might be done if he would obey my orders blindly. He willingly agreed, went back to Rhagæ at my bidding, and the day before yesterday returned secretly to Babylon, where I kept him concealed in my house. Bartja had, meanwhile, returned. It now became necessary to rouse the king’s jealousy, and crush the Egyptian with one blow. By means of your humiliation I awakened your relations’ anger against our foe, and prepared everything for my enterprise. Fate seemed to favour me particularly. You know how Nitetis behaved during the birthday feast, but you do not know that the same evening she sent a gardener into the palace with a letter to Bartja. The

unskilful messenger was discovered, and executed the same evening by command of the king, who was furious. I took care that Nitetis was cut off from communication with her friends, as though she dwelt in the nest of the Simurg.¹ You know the rest."

"How did Gaumata escape?"

"Through a trap-door known to me alone, which was kept open for the fugitives. All went well. I had even succeeded in obtaining a dagger of Bartja's, which he had lost during the chase, and which I laid under Nitetis' window. To keep the prince away, and prevent him from meeting the king, or other important witnesses during these events, I asked a Greek merchant, Colæus, who is at present selling Milesian cloth in Babylon, and who is ready to do anything for me, because I take all the woollen materials we need for the harem from him, to write me a letter in Greek which should invite Bartja in the name of his love—she is called Sappho—to go quite alone, at the rising of the Tistar star, to the first station-house before the Euphrates gate. The letter was a failure, for the messenger who was to bring it to him executed his commission unskilfully. True, he swore that he had given it to Bartja himself, but there is no doubt that he gave it to a stranger, probably Gaumata. I was somewhat alarmed when I heard that Bartja had spent the evening in drinking with his friends. But what was done could not be undone, and witnesses like your father, Hystaspes, Cræsus, and Intaphernes, outweighed the evidence of Darius, Araspes, and Gyges. On one side witnesses against, on the other witnesses for the friend. But everything ended well. The young men have been condemned, and Cræsus, who ventured, as usual, to address the king insolently, has already spent his last hour on earth. The chief scribe has just had to draw up the following document regarding the Egyptian. Listen, my dove, and rejoice!

"The adulteress, Nitetis, daughter of the king of Egypt, is to be punished for her evil deeds with all the severity of the law, as follows: She shall be placed astride on an ass and led through all the streets of Babylon, so that the

¹ The fabulous bird of Persia. See Firdusi, "Book of Kings."

people in the town may see that Cambyzes punishes a king's daughter as severely as his judges punish the meanest beggar-woman. When the sun has set the shameless woman is to be buried alive. The execution of this sentence is entrusted to the chief eunuch, Boges. The chief scribe, Ariabignes, by order of King Cambyzes.'

"Scarcely had I placed these lines in my sleeve, when the king's mother, led by Atossa, forced her way into the hall in torn garments. Then followed weeping and wailing, reproaches, curses, and entreaties, but the king remained firm, and I believe Cassandane and Atossa would have followed Cræsus and Bartja to another world if the fear of his father's soul had not kept the infuriated king from laying hands on Cyrus' widow. But Cassandane said nothing in favour of Nitetis. She seems as firmly convinced of her guilt as you or I. We need not fear Gaumata any more. I have hired three men, who, before he reaches Rhagæ, will provide him with a cool bath in the Euphrates. The fish and worms will have merry days. Ha, ha, ha !"

Phædime joined in his laughter, overwhelmed the eunuch with flattering names, which she had learnt from him, and with her full arms hung round his neck a heavy chain resplendent with jewels as a token of her gratitude.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NEW WITNESS.

THE news of what had happened, and of what was to be expected was known all over Babylon before the sun reached its zenith. The streets were crowded with people, who impatiently awaited the rare spectacle which the punishment of the king's false wife afforded them. The whip-bearers had to exert their full authority to keep back the crowds of spectators. When, later on, the rumour of the approaching execution of Bartja and his friends was heard, the joy of the people, who were still intoxicated with the palm wine which had been generously distributed on the king's birthday and the following days, and could not be controlled, assumed another form. Tipsy men joined together and went through the streets, shouting: "Bartja, the good son of Cyrus, is to be killed." The women heard the words in their quiet apartments, escaped from their guards, and forgetting their accustomed veils, hastened weeping into the open air to follow the excited men. The joy of seeing a particularly fortunate sister humbled, vanished at the grief caused by the approaching execution of the beloved youth. Men, women, and children raged, shrieked, swore, and incited each other to still greater violence and fury. All the workshops were empty, the merchants closed their shops, the schoolboys and servants, who had obtained a week's holiday in honour of the royal birthday, used their freedom to shout loudest of all, often without knowing why.

At last the tumult became so great that the whip-bearers no longer sufficed to restore order, and a division of the body-guards was obliged to clear the streets. As soon as

the shining armour and long lances appeared, the people drew back, and entered the side streets, only to assemble in fresh crowds when the soldiers had passed.

At the gate of Bel, as it was called, where the high road began which led to the west, the crowd was greatest, for it was said the Egyptian would be led in disgrace out of this gate, through which she had entered Babylon. A specially large number of whip-bearers was therefore assembled at this spot, whose duty it was to clear the way for the travellers who wished to pass through the gate. Few went out of the town that day. Curiosity was stronger than the stress of business, or the desire to go out. Nearly all those who came from without stayed by the gate when they heard what was to be seen, from the crowds assembled there.

The sun was already high in the heavens, and but a few hours must elapse before the time appointed for Nitetis' ride, when a caravan approached the town in great haste. First came a *harmamaxa*, which was drawn by four horses, then a two-wheeled cart, and finally a waggon drawn by mules. In the first vehicle sat a handsome, stately man of about fifty, in Persian court dress, and an old man in long white garments, while several slaves in simple tunics, with broad brimmed felt hats on their short hair, sat in the cart. Beside it rode an elderly man in the dress of a Persian servant. The driver of the first carriage had great difficulty in making a way for his horses, which were covered with tassels and bells, through the dense crowd. He was obliged to stop close by the gate, and to summon a few whip-bearers. "Make way for us," he cried to a captain of the guards who approached the carriage. "The royal mail has no time to lose, and I am driving a distinguished man, who will make you suffer for every minute's delay."

"Gently, my son," returned the captain. "You see it is easier to leave Babylon than to enter it to-day. Whom are you driving?"

"A distinguished man who has a free pass from the king. Quick, make way for us!"

"Well, the suite does not look royal."

"What is that to you. The pass—"

"I must see it before I let you enter the town." He

addressed these words, half to the travellers at whom he looked with attention and suspicion, half to the driver.

While the man in Persian dress sought his pass in the sleeves of his garment, the whip-bearer turned to a comrade who approached, and said: "Did you ever see such a strange procession? My name is not Giv if there is not something remarkable about these people. Why, the lowest carpet-layer of the king travels with four times as great a retinue as this man, who has a pass, and wears the dress of a companion of the table."

The suspected man held towards him a roll of silk, smelling of musk, on which were visible the king's seal and a few characters.

The whip-bearer seized it and examined the seal. "It is genuine," he murmured. Then he began to look at the letters. He had scarcely deciphered the first of them when he looked keenly at the traveller, and crying out: "Here, men, surround the carriage, this man is an impostor," he seized the horses' reins.

When he had convinced himself that escape was impossible, he approached the stranger again and said: "You have a free pass that does not belong to you. Gyges, son of Cræsus, whom you pretend to be, is in prison, and is to be executed to-day. You do not resemble him in the least, and will repent of having pretended to be Cræsus' son. Get out and follow me."

The traveller did not obey this order, but asked the captain, in broken Persian, to enter his carriage, because he had something of importance to confide to him. The official hesitated a minute, but when he saw that a new crowd of whip-bearers approached, he signed to them to wait in front of the horses, which were stamping with impatience, and entered the harmamaza.

The stranger looked at the captain with a smile, and asked: "Do I look like an impostor?"

"No, for though your speech proves that you are no Persian, you look like a noble!"

"I am a Greek noble, and came hither to do Cambyses a great service. The free pass of Gyges, who is my friend, was lent me by him when he was in Egypt, in case I should come to Persia. I am ready to justify myself to the king,

and have nothing to fear; on the contrary, I expect great favour in return for the news I bring. If your duty demands it let me be taken at once to Cræsus, he will be surety for me, and send you back your men whom you seem to be in want of to-day. Divide these pieces of gold among them, and tell me at once what my poor friend Gyges has done, and what this crowd of people and this tumult mean.

The stranger spoke, it is true, in bad Persian, but with such dignity and confidence, his gift, too, was so munificent, that the servant of a despot, used to submission, thought he sat opposite a prince. He respectfully crossed his arms, and with an apologetic reference to his manifold duties, began rapidly to give an account of what had happened. He had been on guard the previous night in the great hall during the trial, and was able to tell the stranger with comparative accuracy what had taken place. The Greek listened to him with great attention, and often shook his head incredulously, especially when mention was made of the faithlessness of Amasis' daughter, and Cyrus' son. The sentences which had been pronounced, especially that of Cræsus, seemed to move him greatly, but his sympathy quickly vanished from his face, and was replaced first by a meditative look, then by one of pleasure, which showed that his thoughts were crowned with success. Suddenly his grave dignity vanished. He laughed gladly, struck his brow joyously, seized the left hand of the astonished captain, pressed it, and asked him:

"Would you be glad if Bartja were saved?"

"Inexpressibly glad."

"Well, then, I pledge my word that you shall receive at least two talents, if you make it possible for me to see the king before the first sentence is executed."

"But how can I, a poor captain—"

"You must, you must!"

"I cannot."

"I know it is difficult, well nigh impossible for a stranger to have an interview with the king, but my news brooks no delay, for I can prove the innocence of Bartja and his friends. Do you hear? I can do that. Do you see now that you must obtain admittance for me?"

"How is it possible?"

"Do not ask. Act. Did you not say Darius was among the condemned?"

"Yes."

"I hear his father is greatly respected?"

"He is the first man in the kingdom after the children of Cyrus."

"Then lead me to him at once. He will receive me well when he hears that I can save his son."

"Wonderful stranger, there is such confidence in your words that I—"

"That you may believe me. Quick, quick, get people to make way through the crowd and take us to the palace."

With the exception of doubt, nothing is more quickly imparted than the hope that a longed-for wish will be fulfilled, especially when that hope is brought us by a man full of confidence.

The captain of the whip-bearers believed the strange traveller, and, swinging his whip, sprang from the carriage, crying: "This noble man has come to prove Bartja's innocence, and must be taken to the king at once. Follow me, friends, and clear the way for him! At this moment some of the mounted body-guard appeared. The captain hastened to their commander, and asked him, supported by the acclamations of the populace, to accompany the stranger to the palace.

Meanwhile the traveller sprang on the servant's horse, and followed the Persians, who cleared the way for him. Swift as the wind, the hopeful news flew through the great town. As the riders advanced, the crowd opened before them more readily, and the joy of the people increased, till the stranger's ride resembled a triumphal procession.

After a few minutes, the riders stopped before the palace. The bronzed gates had not yet opened when a second procession appeared, at whose head old Hystapes, in torn brown mourning garments, rode slowly on a horse which was dyed blue, and whose tail and mane were shorn off. He had come to ask the king to pardon his son. The captain of the whip-bearers no sooner caught sight of the noble than he uttered a cry of joy, prostrated himself

before his horse, and told him with crossed arms of the hope the stranger had awakened.

Hystaspes signed to the traveller, who gracefully bent before him, and confirmed the whip-bearer's statement. He, too, gained new confidence from that moment, asked the stranger to follow him, led him to the palace, and desired the chief staff-bearer to lead him to the king, while he bade the Greek wait at the door of the king's apartments.

When his aged relative entered the room, Cambyzes, pale as death, lay on his purple divan. At his feet knelt a cup-bearer, who tried to gather up the fragments of a costly Egyptian glass which the king had impatiently thrown down, because the draught did not please him. A number of court officials surrounded the irritated ruler at some distance. It was evident that each feared the king's anger, and wished to withdraw as far as possible from him. Perfect silence reigned in the great room, through the open windows of which the dazzling light and oppressive heat of the Babylonian May day entered. A large hound, of noble Epirotic breed, alone dared to interrupt the deep silence with howls of lamentation. Cambyzes had repulsed the fawning animal with a powerful kick. Before the staff-bearer led in Hystaspes, the king sprang from his couch. He could no longer bear the idleness; his anger and grief threatened to stifle him. The dog's howling quickly aroused a new idea in his tortured brain, which craved for oblivion.

"To the chase!" he cried, rising, to the startled courtiers.

The chief huntsmen, the equerries, and the chief guardian of the kennels hastened to obey their master's order. He called to them: "I will mount the unbroken horse, Reksh.¹ Prepare the falcons. Loosen all the dogs. Summon everyone who knows how to use a spear. We will clear the park."

As though these words had quite exhausted his powerful frame, he again lay down on the divan. He did not notice

¹ The horse of the famous hero Rustem bore this name, which means lightning.

Hystaspes, who had entered, for his gloomy glance incessantly followed the motes which danced gaily in the light that entered the window.

Darius' father dared not address the irritated king; he placed himself in front of the window, parted the beam, and thus attracted the king's attention.

Cambyzes looked at him and his torn garments, at first in anger, then with a bitter smile, and asked: "What do you want? Why do you throw yourself on your knees?"

"Victory to the king! Your poor servant and uncle has come to appeal to the king's mercy."

"Rise, and go. You know I have no mercy for perjurers and false witnesses. It is better to have a dead than a dishonoured son."

"But if Bartja should be innocent; if Darius—"

"You dare dispute my sentence?"

"That is far from me. What the king does is good, and may not be criticised; but—"

"Silence. I will not have these evil deeds touched on again. You are to be pitied as a father; but these last days have brought me no happiness. I pity you, old man; but I cannot repeal your son's sentence any more than you can recall his crime."

"But if Bartja were innocent; if the gods—"

"Do you think the gods will assist cheats and perjurers?"

"No, my king; but a new witness has appeared, who—"

"A new witness! I would gladly give half my kingdom, if I could convince myself of the innocence of these men, who are so closely connected with my house."

"Victory to my lord, the eye of the realm! Without, there waits a Greek who, to judge from his appearance and demeanour, must be one of the noblest of his race. He declares that he can prove Bartja's innocence."

The king laughed bitterly, and cried: "A Greek! Perhaps a relation of the fair maid whom Bartja loved so faithfully! What does this stranger pretend to know of the affairs of my house? But I know these Greek beggars. Insolent and shameless, they interfere in everything, and think they can deceive by their cunning and their in-

trigues. How much did you pay for this Greek witness, my uncle? The lips of the Greeks utter lies as easily as the magi pronounce blessings. I know very well that for gold they may be got to do anything. I am curious to see your witness. Call him. If he wishes to lie to me he had better remain where he is, and remember that where the head of a son of Cyrus falls, the heads of a thousand Greeks are of no consequence." At these words the king's eyes flashed angrily; but Hystaspes let the Greek be summoned.

Before he entered the hall, the staff-bearers bound a cloth round his mouth, and bade him prostrate himself before the king. With noble grace the Greek advanced towards the king, who was looking at him keenly, threw himself down before him, and kissed the earth in the Persian fashion.

The graceful carriage and handsome form of the stranger, who had borne his glance calmly and respectfully, seemed to please the king, for he did not let him remain long on the ground, and asked him, in no unfriendly tone: "Who are you?"

"I am a Greek noble. My name is Phanes; my home, Athens. For ten years I served, not without distinction, as chief commander of Amasis' Greek mercenaries."

"Are you he to whose skilful leadership the Egyptians owed their victory in Cyprus?"

"I am he."

"What brings you to Persia?"

"The glory of your name, Cambyses, and the desire to dedicate my sword to your service."

"Nothing else? Be candid, and remember that a single lie may cost you your life. We Persians have other ideas of truth than you Greeks."

"I too detest falsehood, if for no other reason than that it seems to me unbeautiful, a distortion of what is natural, that is, of what is true."

"Then speak."

"It is true that a third thing brought me to Persia which I should like to tell you another time. It refers to something of great importance; but we need much time to discuss it. To-day—"

"To-day I would like to hear something new. Accompany me to the chase. You came most opportunely. Never did I need a distraction more than now."

"I will gladly accompany you, if you—"

"The king submits to no conditions. Are you skilled in hunting?"

"I have killed many lions with my own hands in the Libyan desert."

"Then come and follow me."

The king seemed to have shaken off his languor at the thought of the chase, and was about to leave the hall, when Hystaspes threw himself at his feet again, and cried with upraised hands: "Shall my son, shall your brother, die innocent? By the soul of your father, who was wont to call me his most faithful friend, I conjure you to listen to this noble stranger."

Cambyzes stopped. His brow contracted again, his voice sounded threatening, when he turned to the Greek, and stretching out his hand towards him, cried: "Say what you know, but remember that with every false word you utter, you pronounce your own death-warrant!"

Phanes listened calmly, and bowing gracefully, said: "Nothing can remain hidden from the sun and my king. How should a poor mortal be able to conceal the truth from such mighty powers? Noble Hystaspes says I can certainly prove your brother's innocence; but I can only hope and desire that I may accomplish this great and glorious deed. At all events, the gods allowed me to find a clue, which seems calculated to throw a new light on yesterday's events. Judge for yourself whether my hope is presumptuous—whether I have too quickly suspected, but bear in mind that my desire to serve you was sincere, and my mistake, if I was deceived, pardonable. Remember that there is nothing certain in the world, and that everyone calls that infallible which he considers most true."

"You speak well, and your words remind me of—. Speak, and be brief. The dogs bark in the court."

"I was still in Egypt when your embassy came thither to fetch Nitetis to Persia. In the house of my excellent and well-known countrywoman and friend, Rhodopis, I became acquainted with Croesus and his son, but I saw

your brother and his friends only occasionally. In spite of this I distinctly remembered the beautiful face of the royal youth, for when I later on visited the studio of the great artist, Theodorus, at Samos, I recognized his face."

"Did you meet him at Samos?"

"No! Theodorus had adorned the head of a sun-god, which the Alcæonidæ had ordered from him for the new temple at Delphi, with your brother's features, which were faithfully stamped on his memory."

"Your story begins somewhat improbably. How is it possible to make a faithful likeness of a face which is not before your eyes?"

"Theodorus has accomplished this masterpiece, and if you wish to test his skill, he will gladly make you a second statue."

"I do not desire it. Proceed!"

"On my journey hither, which, thanks to your father's excellent arrangements, I accomplished in an incredibly short time, changing horses at every station—"

"Who allowed you, a stranger, to use the post-horses?"

"The pass of the son of Cræsus, which by chance came into my possession when Gyges, in order to save my life, forced me to change clothes with him."

"A Lydian can deceive a fox, a Syrian a Lydian, and an Ionian both," murmured the king, and smiled for the first time. "Cræsus told me about it. Poor Cræsus!" At these words his face darkened again, and his hand strove to smooth the lines from his brow, while the Athenian continued: "I journeyed without hindrance, till this morning, in the first hour after midnight, when I was detained by a singular event."

The king listened more attentively, and bade the Athenian, who spoke Persian with difficulty, be quick.

"We were," he continued, "approaching the last station before Babylon, and hoped to reach the town at sunrise. I thought of my restless past, and my soul was filled with grief and disturbed by the memory of unavenged wrongs. I could not sleep, but the old Egyptian at my side, lulled by the monotonous sound of the bells on the horses' bridles, the even tread of the horses, and the murmuring

waves of the Euphrates, slumbered peacefully. The night was remarkably beautiful and calm. The moon lighted the path, and with the stars made the sleeping country almost as light as day. No carriages, no travellers, no rider had met us for an hour. The whole population of the environs of Babylon, we were told, had gone to the town to celebrate your birthday, admire the splendour of your court, and enjoy your munificence. At last I heard the irregular tread of horses and the ringing of bells. A few minutes later I distinctly heard cries for help. Quickly resolved, I forced the Persian servant, who accompanied me on horseback, to dismount. I sprang into the saddle, ordered the driver of the cart in which the slaves sat, not to spare his mules, loosened my dagger and my sword, and spurred on my horse in the direction of the cries, which grew louder and louder. I had not ridden a minute before I witnessed a horrible scene. Three wild-looking fellows tore a youth in the white dress of the magi from his horse, stunned him with blows, and were about to throw him into the Euphrates, which here washes the roots of the palms and the fig-trees on the edge of the high-road. Quick as thought I uttered my Greek battle-cry, which has already made many a foe tremble, and rushed at the assassins, who, cowards like all of their kind, fled as soon as they saw one of their accomplices fall with a broken skull. I let the wretches go, and bent over the wounded man. Who can describe my horror when I thought I recognized in him your brother Bartja. Yes, those were the same features I had seen at Naucratis and in Theodorus' studio, those were—"

"Wonderful!" interrupted Hystaspes.

"Perhaps too wonderful to be believed," added Cambyzes. "Take care, Greek, and remember my arm reaches far. I shall test the truth of your story."

"I am accustomed," said the Athenian, bowing low, "to follow the teaching of wise Pythagoras, whose fame has perhaps reached you, and before I speak always, to consider whether in the future I shall not repent of what I say."

"That sounds very fine and wise, but, by Mithra, I knew a being who often had the name of that teacher on her lips, and in her acts proved herself a true pupil of

fetched from the medicine-chest, without which an Egyptian is unwilling to leave his home, a draught, which he gave the sufferer. The drops had a wonderful effect, and in a few hours the fever had abated, and when the sun rose again the youth opened his eyes. We saluted him as your brother, and asked if he wished to be taken to the palace at Babylon. He refused excitedly, and answered that he was not the man we thought, but—"

"Who can resemble Bartja so closely? I am anxious to hear," interrupted the king.

"He declared that he was the brother of your chief priest and was called Gaumata, and that we should find his name on the pass which was in the sleeve of his dress. The host of the inn found the document mentioned, and as he could read, confirmed the words of the sick man, who was soon attacked by fever again, in which he made all kinds of disconnected speeches."

"Did you understand them?"

"Yes. He always repeated the same things. The hanging gardens seemed to occupy his thoughts. He must just have escaped a great danger, and seemed to have had a meeting with a woman called Mandane."

"Mandane," murmured Cambyses, "Mandane. If I am not mistaken, the first servant of Amasis' daughter bears this name."

These words did not escape the Athenian's sharp ears. He reflected a moment in silence, then he smiled and cried: "Free the prisoners, my king. I will stake my head that Bartja was not in the hanging gardens."

The king listened with surprise, but was not displeased with the bold speaker. The unconstrained, graceful bearing of the Athenian towards him was new to him, and was like a breath of sea air when a man feels it on his brow for the first time. His nobles, and even his nearest relations, dared only address him with bent head, but the Greek stood upright before him; the Persians were accustomed to accompany every word addressed to their ruler with flowery phrase and flattering speech; the Athenian spoke simply, freely, and accompanied his speech with such graceful gestures and expressive looks that, in spite of his want of fluency, the

king understood his words better than the most elaborate report of his own subjects. This stranger and Nitetis alone made him forget that he was a king. Here man stood before man, here the proud despot forgot that he spoke to one whose life and death depended on his caprice. The stern ruler was influenced greatly by the dignity of the man, by the feeling that before him stood one who was conscious of his right to liberty, and who was of superior culture. There was another thing which won Cambyes quickly. The Athenian appeared to have arrived in order to restore to him his best-beloved treasure, which seemed lost, and worse than lost. But how could the life of this foreign adventurer be taken as a pledge for the sons of the first Persians? Phanes' proposal did not, however, anger the king. He smiled at the boldness of the Greek, who in his eagerness had freed himself from the cloth which covered his mouth and beard, and cried: "By Mithra, Greek, it seems you want to bring us good. I accept your proposal. But if, in spite of your conjecture, the prisoners are guilty, you will have to live at court as my servant all your life. If you are really able to prove what my heart desires, then I will make you the richest of your people."

Phanes smiled and asked: "Will you allow me to put a few questions to you and to your court officials?"

"Speak, and ask what and how you like."

At this moment the chief huntsman entered the hall, and announced that all was ready for the chase.

"Wait!" shouted the king to the nobleman, who was breathless with his eagerness to hasten all preparations. "I do not know if we shall hunt to-day. Where is Bishen, the chief whip-bearer?"

Datis, the eye of the king as he was called, who according to modern ideas filled the office of head of the police, hastened from the room, and returned in a few minutes with Bishen. Phanes had meanwhile asked the nobles about certain details of importance to him.

"What are the prisoners doing?" asked Cambyes of the captain, who lay prostrate before him.

"Victory to the king! They await death calmly, for it is sweet to die by your will."

"Did you hear their conversation?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Did they confess their guilt to each other?"

"Mithra alone can see into the heart; but you, my lord, would, like me, your poorest slave, believe in the innocence of these men, if you could hear them speak."

The captain looked up anxiously at the king, for he feared that these words would rouse his anger; but Cambyzes smiled graciously, instead of being angry. Suddenly a sad thought clouded his face, and he asked, almost inaudibly: "When was Cræsus executed?"

The captain trembled at these words; the perspiration stood on his brow, and his lips could scarcely murmur: "He is— He has— We thought—"

"What did you think?" asked the king, in whose breast a new hope dawned. "Did you not carry out my orders at once? Is Cræsus still among the living? Speak, speak! I will know the whole truth."

The captain grovelled at his ruler's feet like a worm, and at last stammered, stretching his hand towards him: "Mercy, mercy; I am a poor man, and have thirty children, of whom fifteen—"

"I wish to know whether Cræsus lives."

"He lives. I thought I was not doing wrong if I let him, to whom I owe all, live another hour, so that he—"

"It is enough," cried the king, drawing a deep breath. "This time your disobedience shall not be punished; and, because you have so many children, my treasurer shall give you two talents. Now go to the prisoners, and send Cræsus hither. Tell the others to be of good cheer, if they are innocent."

"My king is the light of the world, and an ocean of mercy!"

"Bartja and his friends are no longer to be locked up. They may go into the palace court, guarded by you. Datis, go at once to the hanging gardens, and order Boges to delay the execution of the Egyptian's sentence. Then send to the station-house named by the Athenian, and bring the wounded man hither under safe escort."

Datis was about to leave, but Phanes detained him, and asked: "Will my lord allow me to make one remark?"

"Speak."

"It seems to me the chief eunuch could give us the best explanation. The delirious youth often uttered his name in connection with that of his sweetheart."

"Hasten, Datis, and bring Boges hither."

"The chief priest, Oropastes, too, the brother of Gaumata, must be interrogated; also Mandane, who, I have just been told, is actually the Egyptian's chief servant."

"Fetch her, Datis."

"If Nitetis herself—"

At the Athenian's words the king turned pale, and shuddered slightly. How gladly he would have seen his beloved again! But the strong man feared the fascinating or reproachful glances of the girl, so he cried to Datis, pointing to the door: "Go and fetch Boges and Mandane. The Egyptian will remain well guarded in the hanging gardens."

The Athenian bowed respectfully, as one who would say: "It is your place alone to command here."

The king looked at him graciously, and re-seated himself on the purple divan. He thoughtfully rested his head on his hand, and looked at the ground. The image of the woman whom he had loved so tenderly came more and more distinctly before him, and would not be banished. The thought that this face could not deceive—that Nitetis was, perhaps, really innocent—took a firmer hold of his heart, now open to hope. If Bartja could be cleared, every other error was conceivable. He would go himself, then, to the hanging gardens, take her hand, and hear her defence. When love has taken possession of a man of mature years, it fills his being like his veins, and can only be destroyed with his life.

When Cræsus entered the room, Cambyses awoke from his dreams, graciously raised the old man, who had thrown himself at his feet, and said: "You offended me; but I will show mercy, because I remember the last words of my father, who bade me esteem you as an adviser and friend. Take back your life from my hand, and forget my anger, as I forget your want of respect. Let that man, who says he knows you, tell you what he thinks. I desire to hear your opinion."

Cræsus turned to the Athenian, deeply moved, and, after welcoming him heartily, listened to his explanations.

The old man listened with increasing attention; and, when Phanes ceased, raised his hands to heaven, and cried: "Pardon me, ye gods, that I doubted your justice! Is it not wonderful, Cambyses? My son rushes into danger to save this noble man's life; and now the gods bring him to Persia to repay ten times what Gyges did for him. If Phanes had been killed in Egypt, the heads of our sons would, perhaps, have fallen this very hour."

At these words Cræsus threw himself on the breast of Hystaspes, who, like him, saw his favourite son born anew.

The king, Phanes, and the Persian dignitaries looked on, deeply moved, at the embraces of the old men. None of those present doubted Bartja's innocence any longer, though till now it had been established by mere conjecture. Where the belief in guilt is small, the defender finds open ears.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ACQUITTAL.

WITH true Attic sagacity, Phanes had deduced the truth of the sad events from what he had heard; it had not escaped him, that malice must also have been at work, for Bartja's dagger could only have been placed in the hanging gardens by a traitor. While he told the king of this suspicion, the staff-bearers led in the chief priest, Oropastes.

The king looked at him, angrily, and asked, without preface: "Have you a brother?"

"Yes, my lord. He and I are all who are left of six children. My parents—"

"Is this brother younger or older than you?"

"I was the eldest of all, while he, the youngest, came as the joy of my father's age."

"Have you observed a striking likeness between him and one of my relations?"

"Yes, my king. Gaumata is so strikingly like your brother, Bartja, that he is constantly called the prince in the seminary for priests at Rhagæ, where he still is."

"Was he in Babylon lately?"

"For the last time during the New Year's festival."

"Are you speaking the truth?"

"My dress and my office would render me doubly culpable if I were to let a lie pass my lips."

The king coloured with anger at these words, and cried: "And yet you lie, for Gaumata was here yesterday evening. You have good reason to tremble."

"My life belongs to you, to whom all belongs; and yet I, the high priest, swear by the highest god, whom I have

served faithfully for thirty years, that I know nothing of my brother's presence in Babylon yesterday."

"Your face bears the stamp of truth."

"You know that yesterday I did not leave you for a minute."

"I know."

The doors opened again, and admitted the trembling Mandane. The chief priest gave her a surprised and questioning look. The king observed them narrowly; it did not escape him that the maid was in some way connected with Oropastes; so he asked him, without paying attention to the girl, who lay trembling at his feet: "Do you know this woman?"

"Yes, my lord. Through my influence she obtained the important office of chief servant to the Egyptian princess. May Auramazda forgive her!"

"How was it that you, a priest, favoured this young woman?"

"Her parents died of the plague which carried off my brothers. Her father was a worthy priest and a friend of our house, so we adopted the girl, remembering the sacred doctrine: 'If thou givest nought to the pure man and his widow, then shalt thou be cast forth from the pure and humble earth into stinging nettles and torments and horrible places.' I became her foster-father, and had her brought up with my youngest brother till he entered the seminary for priests."

The king and Phanes exchanged a glance, and the former asked: "Why did you not keep the maid, who seems to me beautiful?"

"When she received her earrings, I thought it right to remove her from my priestly household and establish an independent future for her."

"Has she seen your brother since she was grown up?"

"Yes, my lord. Whenever Gaumata visited me, I allowed him to associate with Mandane as with a sister; but when I saw that the passion of youth began to mingle with the childish friendship, my determination to send the girl away became firmer."

"We know enough," said the king, as he signed to the

chief priest to stand back. Then he looked down on the girl, and thundered : " Rise ! "

Mandane trembled all over. Her rosy face was pale as death, her red lips had assumed a bluish tint.

" Say what you know of yesterday evening, but remember that a lie will cause your death."

The terrified girl trembled so that she could scarcely stand, and fear sealed her lips.

" My patience is limited," cried Cambyzes. Again Mandane started, turned still paler, and found it more impossible to speak than ever. Then Phanes advanced towards the angry king, and asked him in a low voice to allow him to question the girl. Her mouth, closed by fear, would be opened by a kind word.

The king nodded consent, and the Athenian's words were confirmed, for hardly had he assured Mandane of the sympathy of all present, laid his hand on her head and encouraged her, when the tears flowed down her cheeks, and the spell which had bound her tongue was broken. She told in a voice, interrupted by low sobs, all that she knew ; did not conceal that Boges had connived at the meeting, and ended with the words : " I know well that I have forfeited my life, and that I am the worst and most ungrateful being in the world ; but all these misfortunes would never have been possible if Oropastes had allowed his brother to marry me."

With these words, spoken in a tone of deep longing, she again began to sob, while the grave audience, and even the king himself, could not avoid a slight smile.

This smile saved the girl's life, which was in great danger. But Cambyzes would scarcely have smiled, if Mandane, with the ready instinct which never fails women when danger threatens, had not understood how to touch his weak point. She therefore lingered much longer than necessary on the joy which Nitetis had expressed at the king's presents.

" A thousand times," she cried, " my mistress kissed the things which were brought her from you, O king. Most often she pressed the flowers to her lips which a few days ago you picked for her with your own hands. And when the flowers began to wither, she took one after the other,

opened out the petals carefully, laid them between woollen cloths, and herself put her heavy gold ointment-box on them in order to dry and preserve them in memory of your goodness."

When she saw that at these words the face of her stern judge brightened, she gained new courage, placed loving words in her mistress' mouth which she had never uttered, and declared that she, Mandane, had heard her utter the word "Cambyzes" a hundred times in her sleep, in a tone of inexpressible love. She ended with a sobbing appeal for mercy.

The king looked down on her without anger but with intense scorn, pushed her away with his foot, and cried: "Out of my sight, worthless creature. Blood such as yours would defile the executioner's axe. Out of my sight."

Mandane did not wait for a second order to leave the hall. The words, "Out of my sight," were to her as sweet as music. She flew through the wide courts of the palace, and cried like a mad woman to the crowds in the street: "I am free, I am free."

She had scarcely left the hall, when Datis, the king's eye, entered again with the information that the chief eunuch had been sought in vain. He had vanished mysteriously from the hanging-gardens, but Datis had given orders to his subordinates to seek the fugitive and secure him, alive or dead.

The king's anger broke out again at this news, and he threatened the minister of the police, who had wisely concealed from his master the excitement of the populace, with severe punishment if the fugitive were not arrested by the following morning.

He had scarcely finished speaking, when the staff-bearer introduced a eunuch of the king's mother, who was the bearer of a message asking him for an interview.

Cambyzes at once prepared to obey the queen's wish, gave Phanes his hand to kiss, a rare mark of favour accorded to the companions of the table alone, and cried: "All the prisoners are to be liberated at once. Go to your sons, fathers, and tell them they may rest assured of my favour and mercy. I expect we shall find a satrapy for each of them as compensation for a night of undeserved

imprisonment. I owe you many thanks, my Greek friend. To discharge my debt, and bind you to my court, the treasurer shall give you one hundred talents."

"I shall scarcely be able to use so large a sum," returned Phanes.

"Misuse it then," said the king, smiling, and he left the hall with his court officials, after calling to the Athenian: "We shall meet again at the banquet."

During these events deep sorrow reigned in the apartments of the king's mother. Cassandane believed in Nitetis' infidelity after she had heard the contents of the letter to Bartja, but she looked on her beloved son as innocent. Whom could she trust in the future, if the girl on whom she had looked, till then, as the embodiment of all womanly virtues, deserved to be called an abandoned, faithless woman, and the noblest youths could become perjurers.

Nitetis was worse than dead to her. Bartja, Cræsus, Darius, Gyges, Araspes, with whom she was united by the ties of blood and friendship, were as good as dead. She could not even give free vent to her grief, for she desired to control the outbursts of despair of her wild child.

Atossa behaved like a mad woman when she heard of the death sentence which had been pronounced. The moderation which she had learnt in her intercourse with the Egyptian deserted her, and the passion which had been controlled so long broke out with redoubled force.

Nitetis, her only friend; Bartja, her brother, to whom she clung with all her soul; Darius, whom, she felt, she no longer honoured as the preserver of her life, but loved with all the intensity of a first passion; Cræsus, who was to her as a father;—all whom she valued she was now to lose suddenly.

She rent her garments, tore her hair, called Cambyzes a monster, and everyone who believed in the guilt of such men deluded and mad. Then she burst into tears and uttered humble prayers to the gods; a few minutes later she implored her mother to accompany her to the hanging-gardens, that they might listen to Nitetis' defence.

Cassandane sought to calm the distracted girl, and assured her that every attempt to speak with Nitetis would be in vain. Atossa began to rage again, and at last her mother was forced to order her to be silent, and when morning dawned she sent her to her bedroom.

The girl obeyed the queen's command, but instead of seeking her couch, she seated herself by the high window which faced the hanging gardens. She looked with tearful glances at the house in which her friend and sister, alone and exiled from her friends, awaited a shameful death. Suddenly, a powerful resolve seemed to animate her eyes, which were dim with tears. Instead of gazing in the far distance, she fixed her look firmly on a black spot, which flew towards her in a straight line from the Egyptian's house, became more and more distinct, and finally settled on a cypress tree near her window.

At once the sorrow left her beautiful face; she drew a deep breath, clapped her hands and cried: "O look! The bird Homai,¹ the bird of fortune! Now all will be well."

The same bird of paradise, the sight of which had given such comfort to Nitetis, brought new confidence to Atossa.

After glancing round to see that no one was watching her, she looked into the garden. When she felt convinced that there was no one there but the old gardener, she swung herself out of the window, agile as a deer, broke a few roses and cypress twigs, and approached the old man, who shook his head as he watched her.

She stroked the old man's cheek coaxingly, put her flowers into his brown hand, and asked: "Do you love me, Sabaces?"

"O mistress," answered the old man, eagerly pressing his lips on the hem of the princess's garment.

"I believe you, father, and will show you that I trust my old Sabaces. Hide these flowers well, and hie with them to the king's palace. Say you bring fruit for the table. Near the guard-house of the Immortals, my poor brother and Darius, the son of noble Hystaspes, are kept prisoners.

¹ The Persian name for the bird of paradise.

See that both receive these flowers at once, do you hear, with a warm greeting from me."

"The guards will not admit me to the prisoners."

Take these rings, and press them into their hands. Surely they will not forbid the unhappy men to be cheered by the sight of flowers!"

"I will try."

"I knew you loved me, good Sabaces. Now be quick, and come back soon."

The old man went as quickly as he could. Atossa looked after him thoughtfully, and murmured: "Now they will both know that I loved them to the last. The rose means, I love you; the evergreen cypress, faithful and unchangeable."

An hour later the old man returned, and brought the princess, who hastened towards him, Bartja's favourite ring, and from Darius an Indian handkerchief soaked in blood. Atossa took the gifts from the old man's hand with tearful eyes. Then she seated herself under a broad plantain with the precious memorials, pressed them alternately to her lips, and murmured: "Bartja's ring means that he thinks of me, Darius' blood-stained handkerchief, that he is ready to shed his heart's blood for me."

Atossa smiled at these words, and henceforth she was able to weep quietly, even though bitterly, while she thought of her friend's fate.

A few hours later a messenger of Croesus informed the queen and Atossa that the innocence of Bartja and his friends was proved, and that Nitetis was almost exculpated.

Cassandane sent at once to the hanging gardens, to ask Nitetis to come to her. Atossa, uncontrolled in joy as in grief, hurried to meet her friend's litter, and flew from one attendant to the other to tell them: "All are innocent, all are to be preserved to us."

When at last the litter approached with her friend, when she saw her darling pale as death, she sobbed aloud, embraced Nitetis as she descended, and covered her with kisses and embraces, till she observed that the girl trembled, and needed stronger support than her weak arms could afford.

The Egyptian was carried unconscious to the room of the king's mother. When she opened her eyes, her head lay in the lap of the blind queen, she felt Atossa's warm lips on her brow, and Cambyzes, who had obeyed his mother's summons, stood by her couch.

Alarmed and distracted she looked round at those whom she loved best. At last she recognized them, one after the other, passed her hand over her pale brow as though to remove a veil, smiled at each, and then closed her eyes again. She thought Isis had sent her a sweet vision, and she strove with all her strength to retain it in her soul.

Then Atossa uttered her name with passionate tenderness. She opened her eyes again, and once more met the same loving glances which she thought she had seen in a dream. Yes, that was Atossa, that was her motherly friend, that was, not the angry king, but the man who loved her. Now he opened his lips and cried, raising his stern eyes to her like a suppliant for mercy: "O Nitetis, awake. You may not, you cannot be guilty." She shook her head joyfully, and over her beautiful face passed a happy smile like the breath of spring over roses.

"She is innocent. By Mithra! she cannot be guilty," cried Cambyzes again, and he fell on his knees without paying attention to those around.

A Persian physician approached the girl, and rubbed her temples with sweet-scented ointments. The oculist Nebenchari murmured exorcisms, felt her pulse, shook his head, and gave her a draught from his medicine chest. She was restored to full consciousness; and turning to Cambyzes, she asked after she had raised herself with difficulty and returned her friends' caresses: "How could you think such things of me, my king?" No reproach, only deep pain, was expressed in her words, and Cambyzes answered with a whispered entreaty "Forgive me!"

Cassandane thanked her son with a grateful look, and said: "I too, my daughter, must ask your pardon."

"But I never doubted you," cried Atossa, full of pride and happiness, kissing her friend.

"Your letter to Bartja shook my belief in your innocence," added the mother of Cambyzes.

"And yet it was a very simple matter," answered Nitetis. "Here my mother, take this letter from Egypt. Croesus can translate it to you. It will explain everything. Perhaps I have been imprudent. My king, let your mother tell you all that is necessary. Do not scorn my poor, sick sister. When an Egyptian loves she cannot forget. I am so frightened. The end is approaching. These last hours were too terrible. The dreadful sentence of death which Boges, that terrible man, read to me, that sentence forced the poison into my hand. O my heart!"

With these words she sank into Cassandane's lap. Nebenchari, the physician, hurried up, gave her a few drops, and cried: "I thought so. She has taken poison and is sure to die, even though this antidote delays her death for a few days."

Cambyzes stood by him, pale and motionless, following all his movements with his eyes, while Atossa bedewed her friend's brow with her tears.

"Bring milk and fetch my great medicine chest," commanded the oculist. "Call servants to carry her away, for she needs rest above all things."

Atossa hastened into the next room, but Cambyzes asked the physician, without looking at him: "Is there no hope?"

"The poison she has taken is followed by certain death."

When the king heard these words, he pushed aside the physician and cried: "She must live! I command it! Hither eunuchs! Summon all the doctors in Babylon; all the priests and mobeds! She must live! Do you hear? she must live! I command it, I the king!"

At this moment Nitetis opened her eyes, as though to obey her master's command. Her face was turned towards the window. On the cypress tree, outside it, sat the bird of paradise, with the golden chain on his foot. The suffering girl's glance fell first on her lover, who was kneeling by her, and pressed his hot lips on her right hand. Smiling she murmured: "O this happiness!"

Then she saw the bird, pointed towards it with her right hand, and cried: "Look! look! the bird of Ra! the Phoenix!"

With these words she closed her eyes, and soon after was seized by a violent fever.

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD HIB.

PREXASPES, the king's ambassador, and one of the most important court officials, had taken Mandane's lover, Gaumata, whose likeness to Bartja was indeed remarkable, to Babylon, in spite of his wound. He awaited his sentence in prison, but Boges, the instigator of the plot, was nowhere to be found, though the police had exerted themselves to their utmost. The crowds of people in the streets of Babylon had enabled him to fly with ease through the trap-door of the hanging-gardens. Great treasures were found in his house. Chests of gold and jewels, which it was easy for a man in his position to procure, were returned to the king's treasury, where they belonged. Cambyzes would gladly have given ten times as much to gain possession of the person of the traitor.

Two days after the acquittal of the accused, to the despair of Phædime, he sent all the women, with the exception of his mother, Atossa, and the dying Nitetis, to Susa. Several influential eunuchs were degraded from their offices. Their order was to suffer for the crime of the fugitive. Oropastes, who had already assumed his office, as representative of the king, and had clearly proved that he was innocent of all knowledge of his brother's crime, filled the vacant posts with none but magi. The king was not made acquainted with the demonstration of the Babylonians in favour of his brother till long after the crowds had dispersed. In spite of his anxiety for Nitetis, which absorbed almost all his thoughts, he demanded a full account of these unlawful proceedings, and ordered that the leaders of the mob should be severely punished.

He thought these events proved that Bartja was trying to gain the favour of the people, and he would perhaps have given him some actual token of his displeasure, if his better feelings had not told him that it was not for him to forgive Bartja, but for Bartja to forgive him. In spite of this, he could not prevent the thought that Bartja, however unwittingly, was again to blame for the sad events of the last few days, nor could he help wishing to rid himself of his brother as far as was possible. He therefore consented at once to the youth's desire to start for Naucratis immediately.

Two days after his acquittal, Bartja bade his mother and sister an affectionate farewell, and set out on his journey. Gyges, Zopyrus, and a numerous retinue, bearing costly presents from Cambyzes to Sappho, accompanied him. Darius did not go with him, as his love for Atossa detained him. Besides, the day was not far distant when, by order of his father, he was to marry Artystone, daughter of Gobryas.

Bartja parted from his friend with a heavy heart, after advising him to be very cautious where Atossa was concerned. Cassandane now knew the secret of the lovers, and promised to speak to the king on Darius' behalf.

No one had a better right than the son of Hystaspes to raise his eyes to the daughter of Cyrus. He was closely connected with the reigning house by marriage. Like Cambyzes, he belonged to the Pasargadæ, his family was a younger branch of the ruling dynasty, and was therefore its equal. His father was the head of all the nobles of the realm, and was therefore governor of the province of Persia, the country from which the enormous empire and its ruler were sprung. If the family of Cyrus became extinct, the descendants of Hystaspes would have well established hereditary claims on the Persian throne. Apart from his personal advantages, therefore, Darius could demand Atossa's hand as her equal in rank. Still, the king's consent could not be sought now. Recent events had plunged him into a state of gloom in which he had remained ever since, and he might easily give a refusal which must be looked on as final, whatever the circumstances under which it was given. Bartja was therefore

obliged to leave without being satisfied as to the future of the two beings who were so dear to him.

Croesus promised to act as mediator once more; and, before Bartja left, arranged a meeting between him and Phanes.

The youth greeted the Athenian with great kindness, for he had heard nothing but what was good and pleasant about him from Sappho, and he quickly won the friendship of the experienced man, who gave him many a useful hint, and a letter of introduction to the Milesian Theopompus in Naucratis, and finally asked for a private interview.

When Bartja returned with the Athenian to his friends, he seemed grave and thoughtful, but he had soon forgotten his care, and jested with his comrades over the farewell cup. Before he mounted his horse, next morning, Nebenchari asked an audience of him. The oculist was admitted, and begged him to take a long letter to King Amasis. It contained a detailed account of Nitetis' sufferings, and ended with the words: "Thus, this poor victim of your ambition will die in a few hours from the effects of the poison which she took to keep herself from despair. As a sponge effaces a picture from a slate, so the caprice of the mighty of the earth effaces the happiness of a life. Your slave Nebenchari languishes, an exile from home and property, the unhappy daughter of an Egyptian king dies a lingering death as a suicide. Her body will be torn by dogs and vultures, in accordance with the Persian custom. Woe to those who have robbed the innocent girl of happiness in this world and peace in that which is to come!" Bartja promised to take the letter, the contents of which he did not know. Surrounded by the joyous crowd, he piled up the stones before the gates of the town, which, according to a Persian superstition,¹ were to ensure a successful journey, and left Babylon.

Meanwhile Nebenchari prepared to return to his post beside the Egyptian's death-bed. Near the brazen gates of the wall which connected the garden of the harem with the courts of the large palace, a white-robed old man advanced towards him. Nebenchari had no sooner set eyes on him than he

¹ This superstition still exists in Persia.

started back and stared at him as at an apparition. When the old man gave him a familiar, friendly smile, he hastened forward, held out his hand with a heartiness of which none of his Persian friends would have thought him capable, and cried in Egyptian: "Can I trust my eyes? Old Hib,¹ you here in Persia! I should sooner have expected the sky to fall than that I should have the joy of seeing you here on the banks of the Euphrates. But tell me, in Osiris' name, what induced you, old ibis, to leave your warm nest on the Nile and undertake the long journey to the east?"

The old man, who during this speech had bowed low, with his arms hanging beside him, now looked at the oculist with an air of inexpressible happiness, and touched his breast with trembling hands; then he bent one knee, laid one hand on his heart and raised the other to heaven: "I thank thee, great Isis, thou who grantest protection to the wanderer, that thou hast permitted me to find my master again. O child, what anxiety I have suffered on your account. I thought I should find you thin like a starved prisoner in the quarries, miserable, and worn by grief, and, lo! you are in robust health, as stately and handsome as ever! If old Hib had been in your place he would have grieved and vexed himself to death, long ago."

"I believe you, old friend. I, too, left my home only because I was forced, and it was with a bleeding heart. Foreign lands belong to Seth, the gracious gods live only in Egypt on the sacred, blessed Nile."

"Not very blessed!" murmured the old man.

"You alarm me, father. What has happened that —"

"Happened! Hm! Fine things have happened. Well! you will hear them soon enough. Do you think I would have left my house and my little grandchildren, and in my eightieth year have travelled like a Greek or Phœnician vagrant, and gone among these accursed strangers, —may the gods destroy them!—if life had still been endurable in Egypt?"

"But what has happened?"

¹ The ancient Egyptian name for the ibis.

"Presently, presently. Now, first of all, you must take me to your dwelling, which I will not leave while we are in this land of Typhon."

The old man uttered these words with such vehement abhorrence that Nebenchari could not help smiling, and asked: "Have you fared so ill, old friend?"

"Plague and Chamsin!"¹ shouted the old man. "All these Persians are the most good-for-nothing children of Typhon on earth. I wonder that they were not all born with red hair and leprosy. Child, I have already spent two days in this hell, and I have been obliged to live all the time with these unbelievers. I was told that it was impossible to see you, for you could not leave Nitetis' sick bed. Poor little thing! I always said this marriage would turn out badly. Well, it serves Amasis right if his children cause him grief; he deserves it on your account."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"What! I must say it sooner or later. I hate this king, this adventurer who, while he was still a boy, picked the dates from your father's trees, and tore the plates from the doors. Oh, I knew him well, the good-for-nothing fellow. It's a disgrace that such a man—"

"Gently, gently, old man," said Nebenchari, interrupting the excited speaker. "We are not all alike, and if Amasis was indeed your equal as a boy, it is your fault that as an old man you are so much below him."

"My grandfather was a servant of the temple, so was my father, and therefore, of course, I was obliged to become the same."²

"True, the laws of caste order this. Therefore Amasis ought to have been nothing but a poor captain."

"It's not every one has such an accommodating conscience as this upstart."

"Always the same. You ought to be ashamed, Hib. As long as I have lived—and that is a full half century—every other word of yours has been a word of abuse.

¹ South-west wind, which is very dangerous to the fertile valley of the Nile, and is known to us as the simoom.

² The regulations regarding caste in Egypt were not as strict as in India, but as a rule the son followed the same profession as his father.

When I was still a child, I had to suffer from your bad temper ; now the king is its object."

"And quite right too! If you only knew all! Seven months ago—"

"I cannot listen now. When the Pleiades rise, I will send a slave to bring you to my house. Till then remain where you are, for I must go to my patient."

"What, you must! Very well, go then, and let old Hib die. I shall expire, I shall perish, if I remain with these people another hour."

"But what do you want?"

"To remain in your apartments till we leave again."

"Have you been so badly treated then?"

"Yes, indeed ; oh, this abomination ! They forced me to eat with them out of the same dish, to cut my bread with their knife. A wretched Persian who was in Egypt for a long while, and travelled with me, told them everything that defiles us. When I wanted to shave, they took away my knife. A good-for-nothing girl kissed my forehead before I was aware of it. You need not laugh ; I shall need at least a month before I can purify myself from these defilements. When at last the emetic which I had taken, acted, they mocked at me. But that is not all. In my presence an accursed scullion half killed a sacred kitten. An ointment-rubber who had heard that I was your servant, bade that accursed Bubares, with whom I came hither, ask if I understood how to cure the eyes. Perhaps I said yes, for you know in sixty years you can learn something from your master. Then the miserable fellow complained (Bubares interpreted) that a dreadful disease of the eye alarmed him. When I asked what it was, he replied that he could see nothing in the dark."

"You should have answered that the sole remedy for this disease was to strike a light."

"How I hate these good-for-nothing fellows! If I am obliged to stay another hour with them I shall die."

Nebenchari smiled, and returned : "You probably behaved very strangely, and provoked their insolence. The Persians are generally polite, well-behaved people. Try them once more. I will gladly receive you this evening, till then it is impossible."

"I thought so. He too has changed. Osiris is dead, and Seth rules on earth again."

"Farewell! When the Pleiades rise the slave Pianchi, our old Ethiopian, will await you here."

"That old rogue, Pianchi, whom I hate to see?"

"Yes."

"Hm! It's certainly a good thing when people remain unchanged. I certainly know people of whom this cannot be said, who, instead of confining themselves to their branch of a profession, wish to cure internal diseases, and bid their old servant—"

"Keep silence, and patiently await the evening."

These last words were gravely spoken, and had their effect on the old man. He bowed, and said, before his master left him: "I came hither under the protection of Phanes, the former captain of the mercenaries. He wishes to speak with you."

"That is his affair. Let him come and seek me."

"You are all day with your patient, whose eyes are quite strong."

"Hib!"

"Well, if you like, she has cataract in both. May Phanes come with me to-night?"

"I wished to see you alone."

"And I you. The Greek seems to be in great haste, and knows nearly all that I have to tell you."

"Did you gossip?"

"Not exactly, but—"

"My father praised your fidelity, and till to-day I thought you trustworthy and reserved."

"So I was, always. But the Greek knew much of what I had to tell, and the rest—"

"Well?"

"The rest he got out of me, I don't know how. If I did not wear this amulet to protect me from the evil eye, then—"

"I know the Athenian, and pardon you. I should like him to accompany you to-night. How high the sun stands in the sky. Time is short. Tell me briefly what has happened."

"To-night, I thought—"

"No, I must have some idea of what has occurred before I see the Athenian. Be quick!"

"You have been robbed."

"Nothing else?"

"If you call that nothing."

"Answer me, nothing else?"

"No."

"Then, farewell!"

"But Nebenchari—"

The oculist did not hear him, for the gate which led to the royal harem had already closed behind him.

When the Pleiades rose, Nebenchari sat in one of the splendid rooms which he occupied in the east wing of the palace, not far from Cassandane's dwelling. The kindness with which he had greeted his old servant had again given way to the gravity which made the joyous Persians look on him as a sullen man.

He was a true Egyptian, a true child of his caste, whose members, whenever they appeared in public, went their way in solemn dignity, and never jested; while, among their friends and relations, they threw off all the restraint they had imposed on themselves, and became almost exuberant in their mirth.

Nebenchari received Phanes with cold politeness, though he had known him at Sais, and after welcoming old Hib bade him leave him alone with the captain.

"I have come to you," began the Athenian in Egyptian, which he spoke perfectly, "because I must consult you about some important matters—"

"Which I know already," answered the oculist, shortly.

"I doubt it," said Phanes, smiling incredulously.

"You were exiled from Egypt, bitterly persecuted and insulted by the crown prince, Psamtik, and have come to Persia to make Cambyses the instrument of your vengeance against my native land."

"You are wrong. I owe no vengeance to your land, but all the more to the house of Amasis."

"You know that in Egypt ruler and state are the same."

"I think, rather, that I have noticed that the priests in your home like to put themselves on a level with the state."

"Then you know more than I. Till now, I thought the sovereigns of Egypt were absolute."

"So they are when they are free from the influence of your class. Amasis, too, bows to the priests now."

"Strange tidings!"

"Which you were told long ago."

"You think so?"

"Certainly. But I know with still greater certainty that Amasis once succeeded—do you hear?—succeeded in subduing the will of his counsellors to his own."

"I hear little from home—I do not know to what you refer."

"I expect so; for if you knew, and did not clench your fists, you would be no better than a dog, which whines, submits to be kicked, and licks its tormentor's hand."

At these words, the oculist turned pale, and said: "I know I have been insulted by Amasis, but I must tell you that I think vengeance too sweet to be shared with a stranger."

"Well said. But as to my vengeance, I must compare it with a vineyard that is so full that I cannot gather the fruit all alone."

"And so you came to me for help?"

"Yes. I have not yet given up the hope that you will share my harvest."

"You are mistaken. My work is done, the gods have relieved me of my task. Amasis has been punished enough for exiling me from home, friends, and pupils, and banishing me into this land of impurity because of his selfish plans."

"You mean his blindness?"

"Perhaps."

"Then you do not know that your colleague, Petammon, has cut a skin which covered Amasis' pupils, and has restored his sight?"

The Egyptian started, and gnashed his teeth; but he quickly regained his composure, and returned: "Then the gods have punished the father through his children."

"How so? Psamtik suits the present mood of the king. Tachot suffers, it is true, but she is all the more diligent in praying and sacrificing with her father. As to Nitetis, her

probable death will not affect him more than if a friend of his daughter had died. You know that as well as I do."

"Once more, I do not understand you."

"Of course not, as long as you think that I believe your fair patient to be the child of Amasis."

Again the Egyptian started. Phanes continued, without apparently noticing his excitement: "I know more than you think. Nitetis is the daughter of Hophra, your king's dethroned predecessor. Amasis brought her up as his own child, in the first place, so that your countrymen should think the fallen Pharaoh had died without descendants, and, secondly, to deprive Nitetis of every claim on a throne which legally belongs to her. Women can rule on the Nile."

"These are conjectures."

"Which I can strengthen by incontestible proofs. Among the papers which your old servant Hib has in a little box, there must be letters from your own father, the celebrated physician—"

"Even then the letters are undoubtedly my property, which I should not feel inclined to give up. Besides, you would seek in vain in Persia for a man who can decipher my father's writing."

"Pardon me, if I again draw your attention to a few mistakes. In the first place, as I said, the box is in my charge, and though I am used to lay great stress on the rights of property, it will not be restored till its contents have served my purpose. Then, through the wonderful acts of the gods, there lives in Babylon a man who can read every writing which is known to an Egyptian. You, perhaps, remember the name of Onuphis?"

The oculist turned pale, and asked: "Are you sure that man is still among the living?"

"I saw him yesterday. You know he was chief priest at Heliopolis, and therefore acquainted with all your secret teachings. My wise countryman, Pythagoras of Samos, came to Egypt, and, after having submitted to some of your ceremonies, received permission to take part in the instruction of the priests at Heliopolis. His great intellectual endowments gained for him the friendship of Onuphis, who initiated him into the various secret

doctrines,¹ which Pythagoras made accessible to all the world. I, myself, and my noble friend, Rhodopis, are proud to call ourselves his pupils. When your priests heard that Onuphis had betrayed their secrets, they resolved to kill him. He was to die from a poison extracted from peach-stones. The condemned man heard what awaited him, and fled to Naucratis, where Rhodopis, of whose kindness and intelligence Pythagoras had told him, granted him an asylum in her house, which was under the protection of the king. Here he met Antimenidas, brother of the poet Alcæus, of Lesbos, who had lived in Babylon during the many years he had been exiled from home by Pittacus, the wise ruler of Mitylene, and who had served under Nebuchadnezzar, then king of Assyria. Antimenidas gave him letters of recommendation to the Chaldæans. Onuphis journeyed to the Euphrates, settled in Babylon, and, as he had left home a poor man, was obliged to seek some means of earning his livelihood. He procured this by means of Antimenidas' letter. He who had once belonged to the mightiest in Egypt, still earns his bread by assisting the Chaldæans with his superior knowledge in their astronomical calculations on the tower of Bel. Onuphis, though nearly eighty, is still in full possession of his faculties. When I spoke with him yesterday, and asked for his help, he consented with joy. Your father was one of his judges, but he will not let his anger pass from father to son, and sends you greeting."

During this narrative, Nebenchari sat gazing thoughtfully on the ground. When Phanes ceased, he looked at him searchingly, and asked: "Where are my papers?"

"In the hands of Onuphis, who seeks in them the proofs I need."

"I thought as much. Be kind enough to tell me what the box looked like that old Hib thought fit to bring to Persia."

¹ Little is known of the secret doctrines of the priests, which seem to have been their exclusive property, and to have embraced much that was symbolised by the sacred ceremonies. (Plutarch, Isis and Osiris, 4-11.) Some of the doctrines are preserved in the papyri, but they are hard to understand, as the priests purposely made the language obscure. The belief in one god seems to have been the fundamental idea of these doctrines, which probably contained much that was sublime.

"It is a little box of black ebony. The cover is skillfully carved. There is a winged beetle in the middle, and on the four corners—"

Nebenchari drew a long breath, and said: "This little box contains nothing but a few notes made by my father."

"Which will, perhaps, amply serve my purpose. I do not know if you have heard that I enjoy Cambyzes' favour?"

"All the better for you. I can assure you that the papers which might really be of use to you are still in Egypt."

"They were in a large, painted box of sycamore."

"How do you know?"

"Because—attend to what I say, Nebenchari; I must tell you the truth; I will not swear, for Pythagoras, my master, forbids all oaths—this very box with all its contents was burnt in the grove of the temple of Neith at Sais by order of the king."

These words, which Phanes uttered slowly, emphasizing each syllable, struck Nebenchari like so many flashes of lightning. The unimpassioned calmness which he had maintained till now gave way to indescribable excitement. His cheeks glowed, his eyes flashed, but it was only for a minute. Then his excitement changed to icy composure; his glowing cheeks grew pale, and he spoke quietly and coldly: "You wish to make me your ally; to fill me with hatred against my friends. I know you Greeks! Cunning intriguers! you never shrink from deceit and falsehood when you wish to further your aims."

"You judge me and my countrymen in Egyptian fashion—that is, you think we strangers are as bad as it is possible to be. This time your suspicions mislead you. Call old Hib, and let him confirm what you will not believe from my lips."

Nebenchari's face darkened when Hib entered the room in obedience to his call.

"Come nearer," he commanded.

Hib obeyed, shrugging his shoulders.

"Have you been bribed by this man? Yes or no? I demand the truth, for my future is at stake. If you have been entrapped by the wiles of this master of cun-

ning, I pardon you, because I owe you much, my faithful old servant. Tell the truth, I conjure you, in the name of your Osirian ancestors."

The old man's yellow face became perfectly livid at his master's words. For a few minutes he puffed and panted, and could not speak. At last, when he had succeeded in repressing the tears that forced their way to his eyes, he cried, half angrily, half whining: "Did I not say so? He has been ruined and bewitched in this land of shame and misfortune. What a man is capable of himself he suspects in others. You may look at me angrily. Why should I care if I, an old man, who has served the same family honestly and faithfully for sixty years, am called a good-for-nothing rascal, a traitor, or a murderer, if you like." At these words hot tears filled the old man's eyes, in spite of his efforts to repress them.

Phanes, easily moved, tapped him on the shoulder, and said: "Hib is a faithful fellow. Call me a rascal if he ever took an obolus from me."

The oculist did not need the Athenian's words to convince him fully of his servant's innocence. He knew him long and well, and could read the old man's face like a book; it was incapable of deception. He therefore approached, and said soothingly: "I do not reproach you, old man. Why be so angry at a simple question?"

"Perhaps I am to be pleased at your shameful suspicions?"

"Well, no! But now tell me what took place at home during my absence."

"Fine doings. When I think of them it is like biting a bitter colocynth."

"You said before that I had been robbed!"

"And in what a way! No one was ever robbed like that before. If the rogues had belonged to the caste of thieves¹

¹ According to Diodorus, x. 80, and A. Gellius, xi. 18, the thieves who reported themselves to the police were probably placed under supervision, but not punished. Diodorus says that there was a superintendent of the thieves, from whom stolen property could be regained on payment of one-fourth of the value. This strange custom probably arose because every Egyptian was obliged to report himself annually to the head of his district, and to account for his way of living.

we might console ourselves, for we should have received back most of our property, and not been worse off than many others—”

“Keep to the point, my time is short.”

“I know, old Hib can do nothing right in Persia. Be it so. You are master, and must command. I am only the servant, who must obey. I well remember that. It was at the time when the great Persian embassy came to Sais to fetch Nitetis, and to be stared at by everyone like prodigies, that the shameful deed was done. I sat, before sunset, in the little insect tower, playing with my grandchild, Benra's eldest son. He's a fine boy, remarkably clever and strong for his age. The little rogue was telling me that his father had hidden his mother's shoes,¹ as the Egyptians do when their wives leave the children too much alone, and I was laughing heartily, for I think this serves Benra right; she will never let any of my grandchildren stay with me, she always says I spoil them. Suddenly there came such a loud knock at the door that I thought fire had broken out, and let the boy fall from my knees. I rushed down stairs as quickly as I could, three steps at a time, with my long legs, and pushed back the bolt. The door flew open, and a number of police and temple servants, at least fifteen men, forced their way into the house before I had time to ask what they wanted. Pichi, that insolent servant of Neith—you know him—pushed me back, bolted the door, and ordered the police to bind me if I did not obey his orders. Of course I was rude, for I cannot help it when I am angry—you know that, master; then—by god Thoth, who protects all wisdom, I speak the truth—the silly fellow orders them to bind me, and forbids me, old Hib, to speak, and informs me that he has orders from the chief priest to give me twenty-five blows with a stick if I do not obey his orders without a word. He showed me the seal ring of the chief priest. Now I was obliged to obey the villain's orders. These were nothing less than that I was to deliver up to him at once all the

¹ Plutarch says it was considered unseemly in Egypt to cross the streets barefooted, and so the Egyptians hid their wives' shoes to force them to attend to their household affairs.

manuscripts that you had left at home. Old Hib is not so silly as to be caught, though some who ought to know him better think he can be bribed, and is the son of a donkey. What did I do? I pretended to be quite crushed at the sight of the seal ring; asked Pichi, as politely as I could, to loosen my bonds, and said that I would fetch the keys. They removed the cords. I hurried upstairs, five steps at a time; when I reached the top I tore open your bedroom door, pushed in my grandson, who stood in front of it, and bolted it. Thanks to my long legs I was so far in front of the others that I was able to give the boy the little black box you recommended me to be particularly careful of, to put the little fellow out of the window on to the balcony that surrounds the house on the side facing the court, and bid him hide it at once in the pigeon-house. Then I opened the door as though nothing had happened, explained to Pichi that the boy had put a knife in his mouth, and that I rushed upstairs in my terror and turned him out as a punishment. The brother of a hippopotamus believed me, and let me take him all over the house. First they found the great chest of sycamore which you also told me to guard carefully, then the papyri on your writing-table, and gradually all the manuscripts in the house. They put them all into the box and carried it downstairs. The little black box lay safe in the pigeon-house. My grandchild is the cleverest boy in Sais.

“When I saw the box carried out of the house the anger which I had with difficulty controlled broke out anew. I threatened to accuse the insolent intruders before the judges, before the king himself if necessary, and would have set the mob on them if those accursed Persians, who were looking at the town, had not at that moment attracted the crowd. The same evening I went to my son-in-law, who you know is also a servant of Neith, and asked him to do all he could to find out what had become of the papers. The good fellow is still grateful to you for the rich dowry you gave him with my Benra, and three days later he came to me to tell me that he had been an eyewitness of the burning of the beautiful box and all the manuscripts it contained. I got jaundice from anger, but I did not let my illness deter me from handing in a complaint to the

judges. These miserable men refused to hear me, probably because they are priests. In your name I presented a petition to the king, but was repulsed with the disgraceful threat that I should be looked on as a traitor to the land if I ever mentioned the papers again. I valued my tongue too much to take further steps. The ground burned beneath my feet. I could not remain in Egypt, for I was obliged to see you and tell you what had been done to you. As you are mightier than your servant it was my duty to urge you to avenge yourself. I wanted to give you the black box, which otherwise, perhaps, they would also have taken from me. I left home and my little grandchild with a bleeding heart to go to the land of Typhon, in spite of my age. O, the little boy was so clever. When I kissed him and bade him farewell, he said: 'Stay here, grandfather. If the strangers defile you, I may not kiss you again.' Benra greets you, and my son-in-law sends you word that Psamtik, the crown prince, and Petammon, the oculist, your old rival, were alone to blame for this accursed crime. As I would not trust myself to the Typhonian sea, I first journeyed with a caravan of Arabian merchants as far as Thadnor, the palm-covered oasis of the Phœnicians, and thence with Sidonian merchants as far as Carchemis, on the Euphrates, where the road that leads from Phœnicia to Babylon joins that which leads hither from Sardis. Worn-out with fatigue, I sat in the little wood by the station-house, when a stranger arrived, travelling with royal posthorses. I at once recognized him, as the former commander of the Greek mercenaries."

"And I," interrupted Phanes, "at once recognized you, old man, the tallest and most quarrelsome man I ever met. I've laughed at you hundreds of times, when you scolded the children who ran after you whenever you followed your master through the streets, with your medicine chest under your arm. I remember a jest which the king once made at your expense, according to his wont. When you both passed one day, he said: "The old man seems to me like a furious owl surrounded by teasing little birds, and Nebenchari is said to have a bad-tempered wife, who would like to scratch out his eyes as a reward for all the eyes to which he has restored sight."

"What spiteful words!" cried the old man, breaking out into curses.

The oculist had listened in thoughtful silence to his servant's story. From time to time he changed colour. When he heard that his manuscripts, the result of so many nights of toil, had been destroyed by the order of his companions in rank and the king, he clenched his fist, and shivered as though he had suddenly grown cold. No movement of the Egyptian escaped the Greek. He knew human nature, and knew that very often a word of scorn wounds an ambitious man more deeply than a great insult. For this reason he repeated the thoughtless words which Amasis had really uttered, following out his jesting bent. He had calculated rightly, for he saw that during his last words, Nebenchari crushed with his open hand a rose that lay on the table beside him. Phanes suppressed a pleased smile, looked down, and continued: "Now we will quickly end the story of good Hib's adventures on the road. I invited him to share my carriage. At first he refused to sit on the same cushion with such an accursed stranger as myself, but finally he consented, and at the last station he had an opportunity of showing, by his treatment of the brother of the chief priest, Oropastes, what he had learnt from you and your father, and reached Babylon in safety, where I provided him with a refuge in the royal palace, because we could not see you, on account of the sad illness of your countrywoman. You know the rest."

Nebenchari nodded assent, and with a grave gesture bade Hib leave the room.

The old man obeyed, grumbling and scolding in a low voice. When he had shut the door behind him, the oculist approached the warrior, and said: "I fear, Greek, that in spite of everything, we cannot become allies."

"Why not?"

"Because I think that your vengeance will be too mild compared with the vengeance I must inflict."

"You need fear nothing in that respect," returned the Athenian. "May I call you my ally?"

"On one condition."

"Let me hear it."

"You must procure me an opportunity of seeing the result of our vengeance with my own eyes."

"That is to say, you wish to accompany the army when Cambyzes goes to Egypt?"

"Yes; and when my foes languish in shame and misery, I wish to say to them: 'You cowards, you owe this misfortune to the poor exiled oculist.' Oh, my books, my books! They replaced the wife and children I had lost. Hundreds were to learn from them to restore sight to the blind, and to preserve for those who could see the sweetest gift of the gods, the power of sight, the seat of light, the seeing eye. Now my books are destroyed, I have lived in vain. With my books those miserable men have burnt me. Oh, my books, my books!" Uttering these words the unhappy man sobbed aloud with agony.

Phanes approached, took his hand, and said: "The Egyptians have injured you, my friend, they have ill-treated me. They crept into your barn like thieves; incendiaries burned my home. Do you know what they did to me? They had a right to exile and persecute me, my life was forfeited according to their laws. As far as I am concerned, I could have forgiven them, for I clung to Amasis as a friend clings to a friend. The wretch knew it, and yet he consented to that incredible deed. Oh, my brain refuses to think the horrible thought. Like wolves they entered the house of a defenceless woman at night, and carried off my children, a girl and a boy, the pride, the joy, the consolation of my homeless life. What did they do? They kept the girl a prisoner, as they said, to prevent my betraying Egypt to the stranger; but the boy, the image of beauty and goodness, my only son, was murdered by order of Psamtik, the crown prince, perhaps with Amasis' consent. My heart had withered in misery and exile, now I feel that it revives and throbs joyously with the hope of revenge."

Nebenchari looked sombrely at the flashing eyes of the Athenian, and giving him his hand, said: "We are allies."

The Greek seized the oculist's right hand, and returned: "Now, first of all, we must win the king's favour."

"I will restore Cassandane's sight."

“ You can do it ? ”

“ The operation which restored Amasis’ sight is my invention. Petammon stole it from my burnt manuscripts.”

“ Why did you not show your skill before ? ”

“ Because I am not accustomed to give presents to my foes.”

Phanes shuddered slightly at these words, but recovered quickly, and said : “ I too am certain of the king’s favour. The ambassadors of the Massagetæ, returned home this morning. Peace has been granted them and — ”

At this moment the door was flung open, and one of Cassandane’s eunuchs rushed in breathless and cried : “ My mistress Nitetis is dying. Quick, quick ! rise and follow me ! ”

Nebenchari nodded to his ally, put on his sandals, and followed the eunuch to the couch of the dying princess.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEATH OF NITETIS.

THE sun was already trying to find a way through the heavy curtains which closed the window of the Egyptian's room, and Nebenchari was still sitting beside her. Now he felt her pulse and rubbed her brow and chest with scented ointments, then he stared dreamily before him. After an attack of convulsions, the sick girl seemed to have fallen fast asleep. Six Persian physicians stood at the foot of the bed murmuring conjurations, while Nebenchari sat at his patient's head and gave directions to the Asiatics, who acknowledged his superior skill.

Whenever the Egyptian felt his patient's pulse he shrugged his shoulders, a movement which was each time unanimously imitated by his Persian colleagues. From time to time the curtains of the room were opened, and the head of a beautiful girl appeared, whose blue eyes gazed with an anxious, questioning look at the oculist, who answered her with the same compassionate shrug. Twice this inquirer, Atossa, the king's sister, crept to the couch of her sick friend, scarcely touching the heavy woollen Milesian carpet with her feet, and breathed a soft kiss on her brow, on which stood drops of perspiration, but each time a stern, reproving glance from the Egyptian drove her back to the next room.

Here lay Cassandane, awaiting the end, while Cambyzes, when the sun rose and Nitetis fell asleep, left the sick-room, and accompanied by Phanes, Prexaspes, Otanes, Darius, and many courtiers who had been roused from their slumbers, rode wildly through the park. He knew that he

could best subdue or forget his emotion on the back of an untamed steed.

When Nebenchari heard the sound of the hoofs from afar, he started. He dreamed, with open eyes, that the king was marching to his home with an immense host of horsemen, that he threw torches into the towns and temples, and with mighty blows crushed the gigantic pyramids. Women and children lay amid the ashes of the burnt towns, the mummies of the dead moved in their graves like living beings and lamented aloud, and all, priests, warriors, women, children, dead and dying, called his name and cursed him, the betrayer of his native land. A cold shudder seized his heart, which beat more convulsively than the pulse of the dying girl beside him. Again the curtains of the next room moved; again Atossa crept in and laid her hand on his shoulder. He started and woke. Nebenchari had watched three days and three nights without interruption beside that couch. It was, therefore, no wonder that the exhausted man was haunted by such dreams.

Atossa crept back to her mother. Perfect silence reigned in the close sick-room. The Egyptian thought of his dream. He told himself he was about to become a traitor and a criminal. Again, all that he had seen in sleep passed before him, but this time another image forced its way in front of those dreadful faces. Nebenchari saw himself beside the heavily-chained figure of Amasis, who had exiled him and mocked him; of Psamtik and the priests who had destroyed his works. His lips moved softly. In this place he could not utter the relentless words, which in spirit he addressed to his foes who sued for mercy. Then the hard man wiped away a tear. The long nights passed before him during which he sat with his style in his hand by the dim light of the lamp, and wrote down his theories and experiences in the most beautiful hieroglyphics, carefully drawing every character. He had invented cures for many diseases of the eye, which the sacred books of Thoth, and the writings of an old, celebrated priest of Byblos called incurable. But he knew his companions would have thought him criminal if he had dared to attempt to improve on the sacred writings. He had

headed his work with the words: "Some new writings of great Thoth, concerning the cure of the eye,¹ found by Nebenchari the oculist." He meant to leave his work to the library at Thebes, so that his experiences might be useful to his successors, and bear fruit for all sufferers. He wished to find recognition after death, while he sacrificed sleep to science, and by his efforts gained fame for the order to which he belonged. Now he saw his old rival, after robbing him of his invention, the operation for cataract, standing by the crown prince and stirring the destroying fire. The red glow shone on their malicious faces, and their mocking laugh rose to heaven with the flames and demanded vengeance. Yonder the chief priest gave Amasis the letters of his father. Scorn and mockery played round the king's mouth, triumphant joy was in Neithotep's face. Nebenchari was so lost in thought that one of the Persian physicians was obliged to draw his attention to the fact that the patient was awake. He nodded at him, pointing, with a smile, to his weary eyes, felt the pulse of the sufferer, and asked her in Egyptian: "Have you slept well?"

"I do not know" answered the sick girl almost inaudibly. "I seemed to sleep, and yet I saw and heard all that went on in the room. I felt so tired that I could not distinguish between my dream and reality. Was not Atossa here several times?"

"Yes."

"And Cambyzes was with Cassandane till sunrise, when he went out, mounted his horse Reksh, and rode into the park."

"How do you know?"

"I saw it."

Nebenchari looked anxiously at the bright eyes of the girl, who continued: "Many dogs were led into the court behind this house."

"The king, perhaps, wished to forget his grief at your sufferings in hunting."

"Oh, no! I know better. Oropastes told me that dogs

¹ All sciences were ascribed to the ibis-headed god Toth, who is said to have written six books on medicine. The Ebers Papyrus contains a complete work on various remedies.

are brought to every dying Parsi, so that the div of death¹ may enter them."

"You are still alive and—"

"Oh, I know I shall die. Even if I had not seen how you and the other physicians shrugged your shoulders, whenever you looked at me, I should know that I had only a few hours left. The poison is fatal."

"You speak too much, it will harm you."

"Let me speak, Nebenchari. I must ask you something before I die."

"I am your servant."

"No, Nebenchari, you must be my friend, my priest. You will not be angry any more because I prayed to the Persian gods. Our Hathor was still my best friend. Yes; I see you forgive me. But now you must promise that you will not let my body be torn by dogs and vultures. O, the thought is too dreadful. You will embalm my body and adorn it with amulets, will you not?"

"If the king permits it."

"O certainly. How could Cambyses refuse to grant my last wish!"

"My art is at your service."

"Thank you, but I have another request to make."

"Be brief. My Persian colleagues sign to me to command you to be silent."

"Cannot you send them away for a minute?"

"I will try."

Nebenchari approached the magi. He spoke with them for a few minutes, after which they left the room. He pretended that he wished to undertake a solemn conjuration at which none might be present, and try a new secret antidote.

When they were alone, Nitetis sighed deeply and said: "Now give me your priestly blessing for my long journey to the Nether World, and prepare me for my wanderings to Osiris."

¹ As soon as a Persian died, the Drukhs Naçus, the impure demons of death who brought destruction and putrefaction, rushed up in the shape of a fly and seated themselves on the body and on one of those present. Parsees still bring dogs to the dying, probably to induce the spectre of death to enter these animals.

Nebenchari knelt down by her couch and murmured low chants, which Nitetis answered reverently. The oculist represented Osiris, the lord of the Nether World, Nitetis the soul which justifies itself to him.

When the ceremonies were ended the sick girl breathed more freely. Nebenchari looked at the youthful suicide with some emotion. He was conscious that he had saved this soul for the gods of his home and made easier the last hours of a good mortal. At this moment he forgot his bitterness in pure sympathy and sincere love for his kind, but when he remembered that Amasis had caused the misfortunes of this lovely creature, sombre thoughts darkened his soul. Nitetis, who had lain for a time in silence, turned to her new friend with a gentle smile, and said: "Now I shall find favour before the judges of the dead, is it not so?"

"I hope and believe so."

"Perhaps I shall find Tachot by Osiris' throne and my father."

"Your father and mother await you. In your last hour, bless those who bore you, and curse those who robbed you of parents, throne, and life."

"I do not understand you."

"Curse those who robbed you of parents, throne, and life," cried the oculist again, drawing himself up, and looking down at the dying girl, while he drew a deep breath. "Curse the evil ones, maiden, for this curse will bring you greater mercy before the judges of the dead than thousands of good works." The oculist seized the sick girl's hand as he spoke, and pressed it with force.

Nitetis looked with fear at the angry man, and whispered in blind obedience: "I curse them."

"Curse those who robbed your parents of throne and life."

"Those who robbed my parents of throne and life. O my heart, my heart!"

She sank back exhausted.

Nebenchari bent over her, and before the king's physicians entered he pressed a soft kiss on the brow of the dying girl, and murmured: "She dies my ally. The gods hear the curses of dying innocence. I shall bear the

sword into Egypt, not only as my own avenger, but as the avenger of King Hophra."

A few hours later Nitetis again opened her eyes. This time her cold right hand was held by Cassandane. At her feet knelt Atossa. Croesus stood at the head of the bed, supporting the king, who swayed to and fro like a drunken man. The dying girl looked round with bright glances. She was indescribably beautiful. Cambyses approached the lips which were growing cold, and pressed a kiss on them; the first and last which he might give her. Two tears of joy fell from her dim eyes, her pale lips murmured Cambyses' name. She sank back into Atossa's arms, and all was over.

We must pass over the next few hours, for we shrink from describing how, at a sign from the chief Persian physician, all who were present, save Nebenchari and Croesus, hastily left the room; how dogs were brought into the sick-room, and their heads turned towards the dead that they might drive away the Drukhs Naçus; how after the maiden's death, Cassandane, Atossa, and all the servants went to another house, so that they might not be defiled by the body; how all the fires were extinguished in the old house, so that the pure element might be removed from the defiling spirits of death; how conjurations were murmured; how, finally, all who approached the body were obliged to undergo innumerable purifications by means of water and the urine of cattle.

Towards evening Cambyses was again seized with epileptic fits. Three days later, in accordance with Nitetis' last wish, he gave permission to Nebenchari to embalm the body according to Egyptian custom. He gave way to uncontrolled grief—cut his arms, rent his garments, and strewed ashes on his bed and couch; all the nobles of the court were obliged to follow his example. The guards marched with torn flags and muffled drums. The cymbals and kettledrums of the Immortals were wound round with crape, the horses which Nitetis had used, and those which were employed at court, were dyed blue and deprived of their tails. All the court went about in dark brown dresses, torn to the waist, and the magi were obliged to pray incessantly

during three days and nights for the departed maiden, whose soul on the third night awaited its sentence for eternity on the bridge Chinvat.

The king, Cassandane, and Atossa, underwent the ceremonies of purification, and repeated thirty prayers for the dead as though for a near relation. Nebenchari began to embalm the body in a house outside the gates, in accordance with all the rules of art, and in the most costly fashion.

For nine days Cambyses was in a state bordering on insanity. Now furious, now indifferent and apathetic, he would not allow even his relations and the chief priest to approach him. On the morning of the tenth day he summoned the chief of the seven judges, and ordered him to pronounce the sentence of Gaumata, Oropastes' brother, as mercifully as possible, for on her death-bed Nitetis had begged him to spare the life of the unhappy youth.

An hour later the sentence was brought him for ratification. It ran as follows: "Victory to the king! When Cambyses, the eye of the world, the sun of justice, in his mercy, which is great as the heavens, inexhaustible as the ocean, commanded us to judge and punish the crime of Gaumata, the son of the magus, not with the severity of a judge, but with the leniency of a mother, we, the seven judges of the realm, resolved to spare his forfeited life. Because the youth's thoughtlessness endangered the best and highest in the land, and because we fear that his face and figure, which the gods in their grace and mercy have made wonderfully like the face and figure of Bartja, son of Cyrus, might be used by him to injure the pure and just, we have resolved to mutilate him, so that it will be easy to distinguish the unworthiest in the realm from the worthiest. Therefore, with the consent and by order of the king, Gaumata's ears shall be cut off, in honour of the just, and to the shame of the impure."

The king agreed to this sentence, which was carried out the same day.

Oropastes did not dare to ask for mercy for his brother; but the disgrace rankled more deeply in his ambitious soul than if Gaumata had been condemned to death. He feared his own influence would suffer through the mutilation of

his brother, and he bade him leave Babylon, as soon as possible, and go to a country-house which he possessed on Mount Aracadris.

During the last few days a poorly-clad woman, whose face was covered by a thick veil, had stood day and night near the great entrance gate of the palace, and neither the threats of the guards nor the coarse jests of the royal servants could drive her from her post. None of the lower officials who went through the gate escaped her questioning—first as to the Egyptian's condition, then as to Gaumata. When a communicative lamp-lighter told her, with a malicious laugh, the sentence on the brother of the great chief priest, she behaved like a maniac, and kissed the garment of the astonished man, who thought her out of her mind, and offered her alms. She refused them, and kept her post, living on the provisions which people threw her out of pity. When after three days, Gaumata, his head carefully bandaged, drove out of the palace court in a closed harmamaxa, she hurried after the carriage, and ran beside it, screaming, till the driver stopped his mules, and asked what she wanted. She threw back her veil, and showed the sick youth her pretty, blushing face.

Gaumata uttered a low cry when he recognized her; then he regained his composure, and asked: "What do you want of me, Mandane?"

The unhappy girl wrang her hands imploringly, and cried: "Oh, do not forsake me, Gaumata! Take me with you. I forgive you all the misfortunes you brought on my poor mistress and me. I love you so, and would tend you and care for you like your humblest servant."

The youth struggled with himself for a moment. He was about to open the door of the carriage, and clasp the love of his childhood in his arms, when he heard the sound of horses. He looked round, and saw a carriage full of magi, who were going to the prayers at the palace, and he recognized among them several of his former companions from the school of priests. His shame awoke; he feared that he would be seen by those whom he, the brother of the chief priest, had often treated with pride and arrogance. He threw Mandane a purse of gold which his brother had given him at parting, and ordered the driver

to go on at full speed. The mules rushed on. Mandane pushed the purse from her with her feet, ran after the mules, and clung to the carriage. A wheel caught her dress, and threw her down. With the strength of desperation, she sprang up, overtook the mules which were obliged to slacken speed, as the road was uphill, and caught the reins. The driver used his three-thonged whip, the animals reared, threw the girl down, and galloped on. Her cry of terror pierced the wounds of the mutilated man like a lance.

The twelfth day after Nitetis' death, Cambyses again hunted. The chase, with its exertions, dangers, and excitement, was to distract him. The nobles and dignitaries received their ruler with loud acclamations, which he accepted graciously. The few days of sorrow had changed the man, who was unaccustomed to grief. His face was pale; his black hair had become white. The certainty of victory no longer shone in his eye. He had learnt amid suffering that there was a stronger will than his; that he could destroy much, but that he could not preserve the poorest life. Before they set out, Cambyses surveyed the hunters, called Gobryas, and asked for Phanes.

"My lord did not command—"

"He is always to be my guest and my companion. Call him, and follow us."

Gobryas bowed, rode back to the palace, and in half an hour joined the king's suite with Phanes.

The Athenian received a pleasant greeting from many of the huntsmen. This was all the more remarkable, because, as a rule, no one is more jealous than a courtier, and no one is so certain to arouse spite as the favourite of a king. Phanes seemed to be an exception to this rule. He had met the Achæmenidæ openly, boldly, and yet modestly, and had been able to arouse great hopes by his hints of an important war, which was inevitable, and had caused much mirth by the clever way in which he told jests which were as yet unknown to the Persians; hence the Athenian was greeted joyfully by almost all the hunters. When he parted from them to follow a wild ass with the king, they confessed to each other that they had never seen so accomplished a man. The intelligence with which he

had proved the innocence of the prisoners, the skill with which he had won the king's favour, the rapidity with which he had acquired the Persian language were greatly admired. None of the Achæmenidæ surpassed him in beauty of form. In the chase he showed himself a perfect horseman; and when engaged in combat with a bear, he proved himself an exceptionally skilled and bold hunter. When they returned home, the courtiers lauded the qualities of the new favourite; but old Araspes cried: "I am willing to acknowledge that the Greek, who has also proved his skill in war, is an exceptional person; but you would not praise him half as much if he were not a stranger, and his character were not something wholly new to you."

Phanes heard these words, for he was quite near the speaker, hidden by some thick bushes. When Araspes ended, he joined the talkers, and said, smiling: "I understand you, and thank you for your kind feeling. The second part of your speech pleased me almost as much as the first, for it confirmed my own observation that you Persians are the most generous of people, for you are almost readier to praise the virtues of others than your own."

All smiled, and were flattered. Phanes continued: "How different are the Jews, for example. They think they are the chosen people of God, and make themselves despicable to all wise men, and hateful to the world. And the Egyptians! You cannot imagine how absurd they are. If the priests, who possess unexampled power, had their own way, all strangers would be killed, and the whole realm of Amasis rendered inaccessible to foreigners. A true Egyptian would rather starve than eat out of the same dish with us. Nowhere will you find so much that is extraordinary, remarkable, and astonishing as in Egypt. But I must be just, and confess that Egypt is known to be the richest and the best cultivated country in the world. The owner of that kingdom need not envy the treasures of the gods. And this beautiful Egypt is so easy to conquer. Ten years' experience made me acquainted with the existing conditions, and I know that the whole military caste of Amasis cannot withstand a host like your Immortals.

Well, who knows what the future may bring ! Perhaps we shall all make an excursion to the Nile together. I think your good swords have rested some time."

These words, whose effect the Athenian had skilfully calculated, were followed by loud cries of applause.

Cambyses heard the rejoicings of his retinue, turned his horse, and asked for an explanation. Phanes answered quickly that the Achæmenidæ had shouted at the idea of the possibility of an approaching war.

"What war?" asked the king, smiling for the first time for days.

"We are only speaking of general possibilities," returned Phanes carelessly. Then he guided his horse to the king's side, and spoke in a melodious voice that went straight to the hearer's heart, while he looked at the king with sympathy: "O, my lord, it is true that I was not born your subject in this fair land, and but a short time has elapsed since I can boast of having made acquaintance with the mightiest of rulers, but I cannot avoid the thought, a blameable one, perhaps, that from my birth the gods have destined me to become your friend. It was not the great benefits you showered on me that drew me towards you so quickly and irresistibly. I do not need them, for I belong to the wealthy among my people, and have no son, no heir, to inherit what I amass. Once I called a boy my own, a fair, sweet child, but I did not mean to tell you that. Are you angry at my boldness, oh king?"

"How can I be?" answered the ruler, to whom no one had ever yet spoken as the Athenian did, and who felt greatly drawn to the remarkable stranger.

"Till to-day I respected your sorrow too much to disturb you, but now the time has come when you must be torn from your grief, and your chilled heart must be filled with new fire. You will hear things that will hurt you."

"There is nothing that can grieve me now."

"My words will rouse your anger, not your grief."

"You awaken my curiosity."

"You have been shamefully deceived, you and that lovely maiden who, a few days ago, fell a victim to a premature death."

Cambyses' eyes flashed, and he looked inquiringly at the Athenian.

"King Amasis of Egypt dared to deceive you shamefully; you, the mighty lord of the earth. That fair maiden was not his daughter, though she herself thought she was Amasis' child, she —"

"Impossible!"

"It seems so, and yet I speak the truth. Amasis has woven a tissue of falsehood with which he has ensnared you, O king, and all the world. Nitetis, the fairest being ever born of woman, was of royal blood, but not of the race of Amasis, the usurper of crowns. No! Hophra, the true king of Egypt, whom he overthrew, was the father of this pearl. Frown, my lord, you have a right to do so, for it is cruel to be deceived by friends and allies."

Cambyses spurred his horse and cried, after Phanes had been silent for a long time, in order to let his last words produce a deeper effect: "Go on, I wish to know more."

"Hophra, the dethroned king,¹ had spent twenty years in imprisonment at Sais, when his wife, who had given birth to and buried three children, discovered that she was pregnant. Hophra was happy, and wishing to thank the gods for their favour, went to the temple of Pacht, an Egyptian goddess to whom the gift of children is ascribed, in order to sacrifice to her, when a former noble of his court, Patarbemis, whom he had shamefully mutilated in unjust anger, attacked him with a number of slaves, and murdered him. Amasis had the mourning widow brought to his palace at once, and gave her apartments next to those of Ladice, his wife, who also expected her confinement. Hophra's widow died in giving birth to a girl. Two days later Ladice also gave birth to a girl. But we have reached the court of the palace. If you will allow me, I will have the account of the physician who was present at the children's birth, and helped to

¹ According to Herod. ii. 169, Amasis treated his dethroned predecessor very graciously, and allowed him to live till he was attacked and hanged by Egyptians. We were obliged to make him survive his fall twenty years for Nitetis' sake in order to keep to the account in Herod. iii. 1, which forms the basis of our story. Amasis would scarcely have dared to offer the king of Persia a bride of forty.

accomplish the deceit, read to you. Several notes of his came into my possession by a wonderful stroke of fortune, of which I will tell you another time. Onuphis, formerly chief priest of Heliopolis in Egypt, lives here in Babylon, and knows all the Egyptian methods of writing. Nebenchari, the oculist, will, of course, refuse to help us to discover a deceit which will bring certain ruin on his native land."

"I will await you with that man in an hour's time; Cræsus, Nebenchari, and the Achæmenidæ, who were in Egypt, must also be present; I must have certainty before I act. Your evidence is not enough, for I know from Amasis himself that you have reason to be angry with his house."

At the appointed time all who had been summoned appeared before the king. The former chief priest, Onuphis, was an old man of eighty, whose head would have looked like that of a skeleton, save for the large grey eyes which were bright and full of intelligence. He sat in an arm-chair, even in the king's presence, on account of his paralyzed limbs, and held a large papyrus scroll in his thin hand. His dress was of pure white, as be seemed a priest, but here and there patches and rents were visible. He had probably been tall and slender in former days, but age, want, and suffering had bowed and shrivelled his figure, so that he seemed of diminutive stature, and his head looked much too large for his dwarfed body.

Nebenchari stood beside this strange man, and arranged the cushions which supported his back. The oculist honoured him not only as the chief priest, who was initiated into all mysteries, but also as an old man. Phanes stood on his left; beside him Darius, Cræsus, and Prexaspes. The king sat on his throne. His face was stern and gloomy when he broke the silence, and said: "The noble Greek, whom I feel inclined to consider my friend, has communicated strange tidings to me. Amasis, of Egypt, is said to have deceived me shamefully. My late wife is said to have been, not his daughter, but his predecessor's."

A murmur of astonishment was heard.

"That old man has appeared to prove the deception."

Onuphis made a gesture of assent.

"My first question is for you, Prexaspes, my ambassador. Was Nitetis committed to your charge, expressly as Amasis' daughter?"

"Expressly. It is true Nebenchari had praised her twin sister, Tachot, to Cassandane as the fairer of the two royal maidens, but Amasis insisted on sending Nitetis to Persia. I supposed that he wished to lay you under a special obligation by confiding his loveliest treasure to your care, and did not continue the negotiations regarding Tachot, because your late wife seemed to me to surpass her sister in dignity and charm. Do you not remember that in his letter to you he said he confided his fairest, dearest child to you?"

"Yes, he wrote that."

"And Nitetis was certainly the fairer and nobler of the two," said Croesus; "but it seemed to me as if Tachot was the favourite of the royal pair."

"Yes," added Darius. "Amasis once said in jest to Bartja at the banquet: 'Do not look too deeply into Tachot's eyes, for if you were a god I would not let you take her to Persia.' Prince Psamtik was strangely irritated by this remark, and cried to the king: 'Father, remember Phanes!'"

"Phanes?"

"Yes, my lord," answered the Athenian. "Amasis once betrayed the secret to me, when he was intoxicated. Psamtik warned him not to forget himself for the second time."

"Let me hear how this happened."

"When I returned victorious from Cyprus to Sais a great festival was held at court. Amasis honoured me in every way, and, to the horror of his countrymen, embraced me because I had won a rich province for him. The more intoxicated he became, the more eagerly he appreciated what I had done. When Psamtik and I at last led him to his dwelling, and we passed the apartments of his daughters, he stopped and said: 'There the girls sleep. If you will put away your wife, Athenian, I will give you Nitetis for a wife. I should like you for my son-in-law. There is a strange story connected with that girl, Phanes. She is not my own child!' Psamtik did

not allow the intoxicated king to proceed further; he laid his hand on his mouth, and roughly ordered me to my lodgings. There I pondered upon what I had heard, and conjectured what I now know for certain. I pray you, my lord, to command this old man to translate those parts of the diary of Imhotep, the physician, which refer to this affair."

Cambyes nodded, and the old man read in a loud, full voice, which no one would have expected to proceed from his frail body: "On the fifth day of the month Toth,¹ I was summoned to the king. I expected this summons, as the queen was in labour. With my help, she gave birth to a weak girl. When the nurse had taken charge of it, Amasis led me behind the curtain, which divided the bedroom of his wife. There lay another baby, in which I recognized the new-born child of the wife of Hophra, who had died under my hands on the third day of Toth. The king pointed to the baby and said: 'This is an orphan, but as the law says, we are to take charge of orphans, Ladice and I have resolved to bring up this infant as if she were our own daughter. But we wish to hide our deed from the world and from the child. Therefore I beg of you to keep this secret, and to spread abroad that Ladice has given birth to twins. If you do as we wish, you shall receive five thousand golden rings, and every year as long as you live, one third of this sum.' I bowed in silence, ordered all present to leave the room, then summoned them back, and told them that Ladice had given birth to another daughter. The real child of Amasis was called Tachot, the other Nitetis."

Cambyes sprang up at these words, and strode up and down the hall. Onuphis continued without noticing him: "On the sixth day of the month Thoth. When this morning I lay down to rest a little from the exertions of the night, a servant of the king appeared and brought me the promised money and a letter. I was commanded to provide a dead child, which was to be buried with great pomp as the dead child of Hophra. An hour ago, with great difficulty I obtained what I wanted from a poor girl, who had been secretly confined at the house of the old woman

¹ Toth lasted from Aug. 29 to Sept. 27.

who lives at the entrance of the necropolis. She would not give up her dead darling who had caused her so much grief and shame, and only consented when I promised that it should be embalmed in the most costly fashion, and splendidly buried. In my great medicine chest, which my son Nebenchari was obliged to carry this time, instead of my servant Hib, we took the little body into the room of Hophra's wife. The poor girl's child will be splendidly buried. I wish I might tell her what a beautiful fate awaits her darling after death. Nebenchari was just now summoned to the king."

When this name was pronounced for the second time, Cambyses stopped and asked: "Is Nebenchari, our oculist, the man who is mentioned in this document?"

"Nebenchari," returned Phanes, "is the son of that Imhotep who changed the children."

The oculist looked down frowning darkly.

Cambyes took the papyrus scroll from Onuphis, examined it, shook his head, approached the oculist, and said: "Look at these characters, and tell me whether your father wrote them?"

Nebenchari fell on his knees, and raised his hands.

"I ask you, did your father write these characters?"

"I do not know whether—indeed—"

"I want to know the truth, yes or no?"

"Yes my king, but—"

"Rise, and rest assured of my favour. It is right for the subject to be loyal to his ruler, but do not forget that now you must call me your king. Cassandane sent me word that you meant to restore her sight to-morrow by means of an operation. Are you not undertaking too much?"

"My lord, I am certain of my skill."

"One thing more. You knew of this deception?"

"Yes, my prince."

"You allowed me to be deceived?"

"I had been forced to swear to Amasis to keep the secret, and an oath—"

"An oath is sacred. Gobryas, see that both these Egyptians receive a portion from my table. You seem to need better nourishment, old man?"

"I need nothing but air to breathe, a crumb of bread, a

drop of water, in order not to die of hunger and thirst, a clean dress to be pleasant to the gods and myself, and a little room of my own, in order to be in no one's way. I was never richer than to-day."

"How so?"

"I am about to give away a kingdom."

"You speak in riddles."

"My translation has proved that your late wife was Hophra's child. According to our laws of inheritance, the daughters of kings have a perfectly legal claim to the throne when there are no sons or brothers. If she dies childless, her husband is her legal heir. Amasis seized the throne, but Hophra and his descendants have hereditary claims on the royal power. Psamtik loses his right to the throne as soon as a brother, son, daughter, or son-in-law of Hophra appears. Therefore in you, my king, I salute the future lord of my beautiful country."

Cambyses smiled, well pleased, and Onuphis continued: "I have read in the stars that Psamtik will perish, and that the crown of Egypt is reserved for you."

"The stars shall be right," cried Cambyses. "But you, generous old man, I command you to express a wish."

"Let me accompany your army in a chariot. I yearn to die by the Nile."

"Be it so. Now leave me, friends. See that all companions of the table appear at the feast. We will hold a council of war over the wine. A campaign in Egypt seems to me more desirable than a war with the Massagetæ."

"Victory to the king!" cried all full of joy, and they went away, while Cambyses summoned his attendants, and for the first time exchanged his mourning garments for his splendid royal robes.

Cræsus and Phanes went together to the garden on the east side of the palace. It was full of plantations of trees and shrubs, of fountains, and flower-beds. The Athenian was radiant with delight, while the dethroned king looked down full of anxiety.

"Have you considered, Greek," he asked, "what a brand you have just cast into the world?"

"Children and fools act without thought."

"You forget those who are misled by their passions."

"I am not one of those."

"And yet vengeance breeds the most terrible passions."

"Only when it is exercised in blind excitement. My vengeance is cold as iron, but I know my duty."

"The first duty of the virtuous is to subject his welfare to that of his country."

"I know it."

"But you forget that with Egypt you have delivered your Greek home to the Persians?"

"I do not think so."

"Do you believe that Persia will not attack beautiful Greece, when all the other coasts of the Mediterranean belong to her?"

"No; but I know my Greek countrymen, and believe that they will victoriously resist all barbarian troops, and if danger approach, will become greater than ever. Necessity will join our disconnected races, make us one great, united race, and overthrow the thrones of tyrants."

"Those are dreams."

"Which will become reality as surely as I hope to carry out my revenge."

"I cannot argue with you, for I am not acquainted with the circumstances. But I think you are a wise man, who loves what is good and beautiful, and reflects with too much sense of justice to wish to ruin a whole nation merely to satisfy his ambition. It is terrible that fate punishes whole nations for the fault of an individual if he chance to wear a crown. Now tell me, if you care at all for my opinion, what wrong has caused such an intense longing for revenge?"

"Listen, and never again try to turn me from my purpose. You know the crown prince of Egypt. You know Rhodopis. The former for many reasons was my mortal enemy, the latter the friend of all Greeks, but more especially mine. When I was about to leave Egypt, Psamtik threatened me with his vengeance. Your son Gyges saved me from death. A few weeks later my children came to Naucratis to follow me from there to Sigeum. Rhodopis sheltered them. A miserable wretch discovered the secret,

and betrayed it to the prince. On the following night the house of the Thracian was surrounded and searched. My children were found. Amasis had meanwhile become blind, and allowed his wretched son to do as he pleased. He did not shrink—my only son—”

“He had him killed?”

“Yes!”

“And the other child?”

“The girl is still in his power.”

“But they will kill the poor child when they hear—”

“Let her die. Better be childless, than go to the grave without revenge.”

“I understand your feelings and cannot blame you. Your son must be avenged.”

With these words the old man pressed the Athenian's hand, and when the latter had dried his tears and subdued his emotion, he cried: “Now come to the council. No one should be more grateful to Psamtik for his crimes than Cambyzes. This man of quick passions is not fit to be a prince of peace.”

“And yet it seems to me the highest task of a king to work for the happiness of his realm at home. But men are all alike, and praise their butchers more than their benefactors. How many songs resound in praise of Achilles, but who would think of praising the wise rule of Pittacus in songs?”

“More courage is needed to shed blood than to plant trees.”

“But more goodness and wisdom to heal wounds than to inflict them. But before we enter the hall I must ask an important question. Can Bartja remain without danger at Naucratis when Amasis hears of the king's intentions?”

“No; but I have warned him, and advised him to go disguised, and under an assumed name.”

“Did he seem to agree?”

“I think he intended to follow my advice.”

“It would, at all events, be well to send a messenger to warn him.”

“We will ask the king to do so.”

“Now come. The waggon is already driving from the kitchen with the banquet for the court.”

“How many mouths does the king feed daily?”

“About fifteen thousand.”

“Then the Persians should thank the gods that their king is accustomed to dine only once a day.”

CHAPTER XXV.

BARTJA'S ILLNESS.

SIX weeks after the occurrence of these events a small troop of horsemen rode towards the gates of Sardes. Horses and riders were covered with dust and perspiration. The horses guessed that the town with its stables and mangers was at hand, and put forth what strength remained to them, but they seemed to gallop far too slowly to please the two impatient men at the head of the troop. The well-kept royal road, which leads over the Tmolus mountains, was surrounded by fertile, black mould and trees of various kinds, groves of olives, lemons, and plantains, mulberry plantations and vineyards stretched at the foot of the mountain, while higher up grew woods of pine, cypress, and walnut trees. Fig-trees and date palms, laden with fruit, grew in the fields. Gay, sweet-scented flowers were in the grass of the meadows and the woods. Now and then a carefully enclosed well, with seats and shady bushes, was seen by the side of the road, which led over ravines and brooks, half dried up by the summer heat. The oleanders flowered in damp, sunny places, and wherever the sun blazed hottest, slender palms waved to and fro. The sky that stretched over the luxuriant landscape was cloudless and deep blue. The view was bounded towards the south by the Tmolus, whose summits were covered with snow in spring and winter, and towards the west by the Sipylus mountains, which gleamed blue in the distance.

The road led down-hill past a little beechwood; round the stems of the trees twined vines laden with fruit. The riders stopped at a bend in the road, from which they could command a view of the scene. The capital of the

former Lydian kingdom, Cræsus' residence, golden Sardes lay before them in the far-famed Hermus valley.

A steep black rock, on the summit of which stood white marble buildings visible a long way off, the citadel, round whose triple walls King Meles, many centuries ago, carried a lion, in order to make the place impregnable, rose above the thatched roofs of the numerous houses of the town. Towards the south the descent was less steep, and covered with houses. North of the acropolis stood the former palace of Cræsus, close to the Pactolus, which brought down the golden sands. Across the market-place, which seemed to the astonished travellers like a barren spot in the midst of a blooming meadow, rushed the reddish stream, which entered a narrow valley towards the west, and then washed the foot of the great temple of Cybele.

Large gardens stretched towards the east, in the midst of which gleamed the clear lake of Gyges. Gay pleasure boats, accompanied by snow-white swans, covered its surface. About a mile from the waters rose several hills, the work of man; three were especially conspicuous, owing to their height and size.¹

"What is the meaning of those peculiar earth mounds?" said Darius, the leader of the troop, to Prexaspes, Cambyse's ambassador, who rode by his side.

"They are the graves of former kings of Lydia," he answered. "The largest of them, the one on the left, not the middle one, which is dedicated to a royal pair, Panthea and Abradat, is the grave of Alyattes, the father of Cræsus. The merchants, artificers, and prostitutes of Sardes raised it to their dead king. On the five columns, which stand on the summit, you can read how much each party accomplished. The girls were the most industrious. Gyges' grandfather is said to have been their special friend."

"His grandson is not like him, then?"

"It is all the more remarkable, because in his youth Cræsus was by no means an enemy of women, and the Lydians are devoted to the pleasures of love. Yonder, in the valley of the Pactolus, not far from the large gold

¹ Herod. i. 93, says these tombs were the greatest achievement of human hands next to the Egyptian and Babylonian buildings. They may still be seen near the ruins of Sardes.

washing, stands the temple of the goddess of Sardes, who is called Cybele or Ma. You can see the white wall gleam through the grove which surrounds it. There are many shady places there where the young people of Sardes unite in sweet love in honour of the goddess, as they say."

"Just as at Babylon, at the feast of Melitta."

"On the shores of Cyprus the same custom prevails. When I landed there on my return from Egypt, a crowd of most lovely maidens received me with sweet songs, and led me, dancing and playing the cymbals, to the grove of their goddess. I was obliged to give a few pieces of gold, and the most beautiful girl imaginable led me into a perfumed tent of purple material, where a couch of rose and lily leaves awaited us."

"Zopyrus will not be vexed at Bartja's illness. He will remain longer in the grove of Cybele than by the sufferer's side. I look forward to seeing the gay fellow again."

"He will not let you give way to the melancholy which so often overcomes you now."

"I will conquer it, though there is a cause for the mood, which you are right to blame. Cræsus says men are only out of temper when they are too idle or too weak to fight against the discordant feeling. Our friend is right. No one shall accuse Darius of weakness or idleness. If I cannot rule the world, I will at least be master of myself."

With these words the handsome youth drew himself up to his full height. His companion looked at him with surprise, and cried: "Truly, son of Hystaspes, I think you are destined for great things. The gods had a purpose in sending that dream to their favourite, Cyrus, when you were a boy, which made him order your father to keep you in safe custody."

"And yet my wings have not grown."

"Not from your body, but from your mind. Boy, boy, you tread a dangerous path."

"Need he who has wings fear the abyss?"

"Yes, when his strength fails."

"But I am strong."

"Stronger beings will try to break your wings."

"Let them come. I know that I desire only what is right, and I trust in my star."

"Do you know its name?"

"It ruled the hour of my birth, and is called Anahita."¹

"I think I know it better. Burning ambition is the sun whose rays direct your actions. Youth, beware! I, too, once trod that path which leads to fame or to disgrace, but very rarely to true happiness. The ambitious man is like a thirsty man who drinks salt water. The more distinction he obtains the greedier he becomes for fame and greatness. I rose from a common soldier to be Cambyzes' ambassador. What is there left for you to strive for, since except Cyrus' children there is none greater than you. But if my eyes do not deceive me, Zopyrus and Gyges are at the head of those horsemen who are coming towards us from the town. The angare who left the inn before us must have announced our approach."

"Yes, it is they."

"It is. Look how bold Zopyrus waves the palm branch he has just broken off."

"Men, cut a couple of branches quickly from this bush. That's right. Let us answer the green palm with the red pomegranate."

A few minutes later Darius and Prexaspes embraced their friends. Then the united troops rode through the gardens surrounding the lake, the recreation ground of the inhabitants of Sardes, into the populous town. The citizens were streaming towards the gates to be in the fresh air now that the sun began to set and cool breezes to blow. Lydian warriors, with richly decorated helmets, and Persian soldiers with tiaras shaped like cylinders, followed painted girls with garlands on their heads. Nurses led children to the lake, so that they might feed the swans. Under a plantain sat a blind old minstrel, who sang melancholy songs to his large audience, and accompanied himself on the twenty-stringed Lydian lute. Youths, who played at ninepins and dice, enjoyed themselves in the open air, and half-grown girls cried out when the ball of a companion hit them or fell by accident into the lake.

¹ The planet Venus.

The Persian arrivals scarcely noticed this gay scene, which at another time would have delighted them. Their whole attention was given to their friends, who told them of Bartja, and the illness from which he was recovering.

Oroëtes, the satrap of Sardes, a stately man in gorgeous court dress, whose small and piercing black eyes gleamed beneath bushy brows which met, came to receive them at the brazen gates of the palace which Croesus had inhabited before him. The satrapy which he governed was one of the most important and wealthiest in the kingdom. His court resembled that of Cambyses in splendour, though he had fewer servants and wives than the king. Still, a large number of slaves, body-guards, eunuchs, and richly dressed officials came to meet the travellers at the palace gates.

The dwelling of the governor, which was still magnificent, had been one of the most splendid of palaces when Croesus inhabited it. When Sardes was taken the Persian conqueror carried the treasures of the dethroned king to Cyrus' treasury at Pasargada, and the finest works of art were destroyed by rude hands. Since those days of terror, the Lydians had brought forth many hidden treasures, and a few years of peace during the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses had enabled them, by great industry, to recover so much of their prosperity that Sardes was looked on as one of the wealthiest towns of Asia Minor, and, consequently, of the world.

Though Darius and Prexaspes were accustomed to the splendour of the royal court, they were astonished at the beauty and magnificence of the satrap's house. The marble seemed to them especially valuable, for it was not found at Babylon, Susa, or Ecbatana. There burnt bricks and cedar wood had to take the place of the smooth blocks of limestone.

In the great hall, the arrivals found Bartja, who stretched his arms towards them from the cushions on which he lay.

After the reunited friends had feasted at the satrap's table, they went to the room of the invalid, in order to talk without interruption. When they had settled there, Darius turned to Bartja, and said: "Now you must first tell me how you became ill."

"We left Babylon in good health, as you know," answered the prince, "and reached Germa, a small town on the Sangarius, without hindrance. Dusty, wearied by the fatiguing ride, and parched by the sun of Chordât,¹ we dismounted, undressed, and sprang into the waves of the clear, bright stream which flowed past the station as though inviting us to a bath. Gyges reproved us for our imprudence, but we trusted to our hardened bodies, scorned his warnings, and swam joyously in the green water. Calm as usual, Gyges let us do as we pleased, undressed when we had finished, and also bathed.

"Two hours later we remounted, and galloped on as though on a matter of life and death, changed horses at every station, and turned day into night.

"Near Ipsus I felt a violent headache and pains in my limbs, but I was ashamed to confess my sufferings, and kept up till we prepared to mount fresh horses at Bagis. As I was about to spring into the saddle, my strength and senses left me, and I fell unconscious on the ground."

"We were finely frightened when you broke down," interrupted Zopyrus. "It was, indeed, lucky that Gyges was with me. I lost my head completely; he kept his presence of mind, and after he had expressed his feelings in a few words, which were not exactly complimentary, he behaved like a prudent general. The fool of a doctor who hurried up, declared that Bartja was lost; but I gave him a good thrashing."

"Which he did not mind," laughed the satrap, "as you ordered your servants to lay a gold stater on every bruise."

"My love of fighting has cost me much money already; but to continue. Bartja had scarcely opened his eyes when Gyges ordered me to ride to Sardes, and fetch a good doctor and a comfortable carriage. No one will find it easy to imitate my ride. A few miles from the town my third horse broke down from fatigue. I ran as hard as I could towards the gates. The people must have thought me mad. I pulled the first rider I met—a merchant from

¹ May.

Celænæ—from his horse without any ado, mounted, and before dawn I returned to our invalid with the best doctor in Sardes, and Oroetes' best carriage. We drove him slowly to this house, where he was seized by a violent fever, talked as much nonsense as it is possible for a human brain to conceive, was delirious, and caused us such cruel anguish that the perspiration stands on my brow when I think of it!"

Bartja seized his friend's hand, and said, turning to Darius: "I owe my life to him and Gyges. They did not leave me for a minute till they rode to meet you, and nursed me as a mother nurses her sick child. I am indebted to you, too, Oroetes, all the more, because your kindness caused you some annoyance."

"How is that possible?" asked Darius.

"Polycrates of Samos, whose name was so often mentioned in Egypt, has the most celebrated physician of Greece at his court. When I was ill at Oroetes' house, he wrote to Democedes, and offered him large sums of money if he would come at once to Sardes. Samian pirates, who render the whole Ionic coast insecure, captured the messenger, and took the letter of Oroetes to their master, Polycrates. He opened it, and sent the messenger back with the message that Democedes was in his pay. If Oroetes wished for his services, he must apply to Polycrates. Our noble friend humbled himself for my sake, gave way to the Samian, and begged him to send his physician to Sardes."

"And Polycrates?" asked Prexaspes.

"The haughty island king at once sent his physician, who, as you see, soon restored me to health, and left Sardes a few days ago laden with gifts."

"I can understand," interrupted Zopyrus, "why the Samian does not like to let his physician leave him. I assure you, Darius, he has not his equal. He is beautiful as Minutsher, clever as Piran Wisa, strong as Rustem, and helpful as the holy soma. You should have seen how he threw the metal quoits. I am not weak, but after we had wrestled for a few minutes he threw me; and he can tell stories which make your heart leap for joy."

"We have become acquainted with a similar man," said

Darius, smiling at his friend's enthusiasm. "Phanes, the Athenian, who came to establish our innocence."

"Democedes, the physician, comes from Croton, a place which must be near the setting sun."

"And which," added Oroetes, "like Athens, is inhabited by Greeks. Beware of these people, my young friends, for they are as cunning, false, and deceitful as they are strong, clever, and handsome."

"Democedes is noble, and loves the truth," cried Zopyrus.

"Phanes," declared Darius, "is considered by Cræsus himself as virtuous as he is worthy."

"And Sappho," said Bartja, in confirmation, "always spoke in praise of the Athenian. We had better not talk of the Greeks, whom Oroetes does not like, as they are rebellious, and cause him much trouble."

"The gods know that," sighed the satrap. "It is more difficult to control one Greek city than all the lands between the Euphrates and the Tigris."

During the satrap's speech Zopyrus had gone to the window. He now interrupted the speaker, saying: "The stars are already high in the heavens, and Bartja needs rest. Hasten, therefore, Darius, and tell us the news from home."

Hystaspes' son nodded assent, and began the history of the events with which we are already acquainted. Nitetis' death awakened sincere sympathy in Bartja, and the exposure of Amasis' deceit filled all with surprise and dismay.

"After the real descent of the maiden had been established without a doubt," continued the narrator, after a short pause, "Cambyzes seemed quite changed. He summoned us all to a council of war, and at table he again wore royal robes instead of his mourning garments. You can imagine with what joy all received the proposal of war with Egypt. Not even Cræsus, who wishes Amasis well, and usually advises peace whenever he can, had an objection to make. Next morning as usual we considered soberly what we had decided when intoxicated. After various suggestions had been made, Phanes asked permission to speak, and addressed us for an hour. But how he can speak! It was as if the gods had inspired him with

each word. He has learned our language in an incredibly short time; it flowed like honey from his lips, and now called forth scalding tears, now loud shouts of joy and wild outbursts of rage, from all. Every gesture was graceful as that of a dancing girl, and yet manly and dignified. I cannot repeat his speech, for compared with his words, mine would sound like the roll of drums compared with thunder. When, beside ourselves with enthusiasm we unanimously declared for war, Phanes spoke again, and told us how we could most easily gain the victory."

Here Darius was obliged to stop, for Zopyrus embraced him with exclamations of joy. Bartja, Gyges, and Orætes the satrap, received the news with delight, and urged the narrator to hasten on with his story.

"In the month of Farwardin,"¹ continued the youth, "our army must be on the borders of Egypt, because in Murdâd² the Nile begins to rise, and threatens to prevent the advance of the infantry. The Greek, Phanes, is now on his way to the Arabs, to form an alliance with them. The sons of the desert are to provide our army with water and leaders in their arid deserts. Then he intends to gain over wealthy Cyprus, which he once conquered for Amasis. The kings of this island kept their crowns through his mediation, and will follow his advice. The Athenian looks after everything, and knows the way as though, like the sun, he could overlook the whole universe. He showed us a picture of all countries on a copper plate."

Orætes nodded, and said: "I, too, possess such a picture of the world. Hecataeus, a Milesian,³ who is constantly travelling, drew it and gave it to me in return for a passport."

"What wonderful things these Greeks invent," cried Zopyrus, who could not imagine what a picture of the world would look like.

"To-morrow I will show you my copper plate," said

¹ March.

² April.

³ Hecataeus improved Anaximander's map, and wrote a history of the world, which the ancients considered the best of its kind. Unfortunately fragments only are extant. He was born in 550 B.C. The oldest known map is an Egyptian one of the gold mines, which is in the Egyptian Museum at Turin.

Orcetes. "But now we must not interrupt Darius again."

"Phanes went to Arabia," continued Darius, "while Prexaspes departed in order to command you, Orcetes, to collect as many soldiers as possible, especially Ionians and Carians, whom the Athenian will undertake to lead, and also to offer our alliance to Polycrates."

"An alliance with that pirate?" asked Orcetes, frowning.

"Yes," said Prexaspes, intentionally disregarding Orcetes' angry look, "Phanes has already received promises from the lord of so many beautiful ships, and thus my mission seems to promise a successful issue."

"The Phœnician, Syrian, and Ionian warships would suffice to overpower the Egyptian fleet," returned Orcetes.

"Certainly, but if Polycrates declared against us, we could scarcely remain masters of the sea. You yourself said that in the Ægean Sea he ruled at will."

"Nevertheless, I do not approve of an alliance with that pirate."

"We must first of all seek strong allies, and Polycrates' navy is very powerful. When we have seized Egypt with his help, the time will have come to humble his insolence. Meanwhile I must ask you to control your anger, and only to think of the success of our great enterprise. I utter these words in the name of the king, whose ring I wear, and am commanded to show you."

Orcetes bowed slightly at the sign of royal power, and asked: "What does Cambyses desire of me?"

"He commands you to do all in your power to form an alliance with the Samian. You are further to let your troops join the great army in the Babylonian plain as soon as possible."

The satrap bowed and sullenly left the room. As soon as the sound of his footsteps died away in the passages of the inner court, Zopyrus cried: "Poor man! It is hard for him to treat with consideration that arrogant Samian, who has behaved so insolently to him. Remember the story of the physician."

"You are too lenient," interrupted Darius. "I do not like Orcetes. No one should receive his king's commands in this manner. Did you not see that he bit his lips till

the blood came, when Prexaspes showed him the king's ring?"

"There is a rebellious spirit in that man," cried the ambassador. "He left us so quickly because he could not control his anger any longer."

"But I must entreat you," said Bartja, "to conceal the behaviour of the satrap from my brother, for I owe him much."

Prexaspes bowed, but Darius said: "At all events we must keep an eye on him. Just at this place, so far from the king's gate, in the midst of hostile races, we need governors who obey their rulers more willingly than Oroetes, who imagines that he is king of Lydia."

"Are you displeased with him?" asked Zopyrus.

"Yes, I think so," answered he. "The people I meet inspire me at once either with affection or dislike. This quick, inexplicable feeling, has seldom deceived me. I disliked Oroetes before I had heard him speak a word. It was just the same with the Egyptian Psamtik, while, on the other hand, I liked Amasis at once."

"You are different from us," laughed Zopyrus. "But now please leave Oroetes in peace; it's a good thing he has gone: now you can tell us more freely about home. How are Cassandane and your divinity, Atossa? How is Cræsus? What are my wives doing? They will soon have a new companion, for I mean to woo Oroetes' fair daughter to-morrow. We have told each other our love with our eyes. I do not know if we spoke Persian or Syrian, but we said very amiable things to each other."

The friends laughed, and Darius, joining in the general merriment, cried: "Now you shall hear some pleasant news, which I was really keeping to the last, as it is the best. Now, Bartja, listen. Your mother, noble Cassandane, has had her sight restored. Yes, yes, it is perfectly true. Who cured her? Why, who else but the melancholy Egyptian, who is, if possible, gloomier than ever. Now be quiet, and let me proceed, or it will be morning before Bartja goes to sleep. We ought really to part now, for you have heard the best, and can dream of it. You will not? Then, in Mithra's name, I will continue, though my heart bleeds.

"Let me begin with the king. While Phanes was in Babylon he seemed to forget his grief for the Egyptian. The Athenian was not allowed to leave him. They were inseparable as Reksh and Rustem. Cambyzes found no time to grieve in his company, for the Greek had new ideas every minute, and not only amused the king, but all of us in an admirable way. Everyone liked him, I think, because no one could really envy him. Whenever he was alone for a minute his eyes filled with tears for his murdered boy, and this made the cheerfulness with which he managed to infect your grave brother, all the more praiseworthy. Every morning he rode with Cambyzes and all of us to the Euphrates, and took pleasure in the exercises of the young Achæmenidæ. When he saw the boys ride quickly past the sand hills with their bows and arrows, and pierce the pots which stood on them; when he saw them throw pieces of wood at each other and cleverly dodge them, he confessed that he could not imitate them, but he offered to compete with all of us in throwing the spear and wrestling. With his usual vivacity he at once sprang from his horse, threw off his clothes—it was disgraceful—and to the joy of the boys, threw their wrestling master to the ground like a feather. Then he overcame a number of men who boasted of their strength, and would perhaps have conquered me if he had not been fatigued. I can assure you that I am stronger than he, for I can lift heavier weights, but the Athenian is as agile as an eel, and seizes his opponent in a manner wonderful to behold. His nudity was a great help to him. If it were not unseemly, we ought to wrestle naked, and rub ourselves with olive oil like the Athenians. He surpassed us in throwing the spear, but the arrow of the king, who you know is proud of being the best shot in Persia, flew further than his. He was most pleased with our custom, according to which, after the wrestling match, the conquered competitor kisses the victor's hand. Then he showed us a new exercise, boxing. He would not show his skill on a free man, so the king sent for Bessus, my groom, the strongest and biggest of all the servants, who with his gigantic arms can press together the hind legs of a horse, so that the animal trembles and cannot move. The powerful fellow, who is at least a head taller than Phanes, laughed

and shrugged his shoulders compassionately when he heard that he was to box with the little foreigner. Certain of victory, he placed himself opposite the Athenian, and aimed a blow at him which would have killed an elephant. But Phanes avoided it, and at the same time gave the giant such a blow with his fist between the eyes that blood streamed from eyes and nose, and the uncouth fellow fell down howling. When he was raised his face looked like a greenish-blue gourd. The boys shouted with joy at the blow. We admired the skill of the Greek, and rejoiced at the king's good humour, which was especially apparent when Phanes sang cheerful Greek songs and dance tunes to the accompaniment of the lute.

"Meanwhile Cassandane's sight had been restored by the skill of Nebenchari, the Egyptian, and this event also helped to dispel the king's melancholy. All was well, and I was about to ask for Atossa's hand, when Phanes left for Arabia, and everything changed at once.

"As soon as the Athenian left the gates, all evil divinities seemed to have entered the king. He went about, silent and gloomy, did not speak, and drank great cans of strong Syrian wine early in the morning, in order to drown his melancholy. In the evening he was so drunk that he generally had to be carried out of the hall, and in the morning he awoke with convulsions and headache. During the day he wandered about as though seeking something, and at night he was often heard to utter Nitetis' name. The physicians were anxious about his health, and gave him medicine, which he threw away. Cræsus was right when he said to them one day: "Magi and Chaldæans, before you try to cure, you should find out the seat of the disease. Do you know it? I will tell you what ails the king. He has an inward disease and a wound. The first is called dullness, and the second is in his heart. The Athenian can cure the first, but I know no remedy for the second, for experience teaches that such wounds either heal of their own accord, or bleed inwardly.

"'I know a cure for the king,' cried Otanes, who had heard these words. 'We ought to advise him to recall the women from Susa, or at all events my daughter Phædime. Love distracts melancholy, and hastens the

course of the sluggish blood.' We agreed with the speaker, and asked him to remind the king of the banished women. Otanes ventured to speak of them when we sat at the feast, but the king replied so angrily, that we were all sorry for him. Soon after, Cambyzes summoned the Mobeds and Chaldæans to explain to him a remarkable dream.

"He dreamed he was in a desert; the soil resembled a threshing floor, not a blade of grass grew there. Annoyed at the bare, sad aspect of the place, he was just about to seek more fertile spots, when Atossa appeared, and without noticing him ran towards a spring, which suddenly, as though by magic, flowed with cheerful murmur from the barren earth,. He looked on surprised, and saw that wherever his sister's foot touched the scorched earth slender terebinths¹ appeared, which, as they grew up, turned to cypresses, whose tops reached the sky. When he was about to accost Atossa, he awoke.

"The Mobeds and Chaldæans consulted, and interpreted it to mean that Atossa would succeed in all she undertook.

"Cambyzes was satisfied with the answer, but when he had a similar dream the following night, he threatened to kill the Mobeds if they could not give him a better explanation. The wise men consulted for a long time, and at last answered that Atossa would become a queen, and the mother of mighty princes.

"The king was satisfied with this explanation, and smiled strangely when he told us his dream.

"Cassandane summoned me the same day, and told me that if I valued my life, I must give up all hope of her daughter.

"As I was about to leave the garden, I saw Atossa behind a pomegranate bush. She signed. I came. We forgot danger and pain, and at last parted for ever. Now you know everything, and now I have renounced all hopes of that fair girl, for they would be madness. I must exert my strength, so as not to become melancholy for a woman's sake, like the king. That is the end of the story whose conclusion we expected, when Atossa's rose made me, the condemned man, the happiest of all mortals. If

¹ Kings of Persia used to eat the fruit of the terebinth at their coronation.

in the hour of death I had not betrayed my secret, it would have gone to my grave with me. But what am I saying? I can rely on your secrecy, and must ask you not to look at me with such pity. I am still enviable, I think, for I have enjoyed an hour's bliss which outweighs a hundred years of misery. I thank you, I thank you. Now let me finish quickly.

"Three days after my parting from Atossa I was obliged to wed Artystone, Gobryas' daughter. She is beautiful, and would make any other man happy. On the morning after my wedding the angare arrived, who brought the news of Bartja's illness to Babylon. My mind was quickly made up. I asked the king's permission to seek and nurse you, and warn you of the danger which threatened you in Egypt. In spite of my father-in-law's remonstrances, I took leave of my newly-wedded wife, and accompanied by Prexaspes, rode without stopping to seek you, my Bartja, and accompany you and Zopyrus to Egypt. Gyges goes with the ambassador to Samos as interpreter. This is the king's command. His temper has improved lately, because he finds distraction in reviewing the army, and the Chaldæans have assured him that the planet Adar,¹ which is ruled by their war god, promises a great victory to Persian weapons. When shall you be able to travel, Bartja?"

"To-morrow, if you like," he answered. "The physician says a sea journey would do me good. The land journey to Smyrna is very short."

"And I assure you," added Zopyrus, "that your beloved will cure you more quickly than the best physicians."

"Then we will leave in three days," said Darius, thoughtfully, "for we have much to prepare before leaving. I have reflected that Bartja must appear as a trader in carpets from Babylon. I will represent his brother, and Zopyrus a merchant who deals in Sardian red."

"Can we not appear as warriors?" asked Zopyrus. "It is disgraceful to be looked on as such cheats and bargainers. Suppose we pretend to be Lydian soldiers who have fled to avoid punishment, and seek service in the Egyptian army."

¹ Mars.

"That is better," said Bartja. "Besides, I think from our bearing we should be taken for warriors rather than merchants."

"That does not follow," answered Gyges. "A Greek merchant and ship-owner walks as though the world belonged to him. But I do not think Zopyrus' plan amiss."

"Very well," said Darius, yielding. "Then Orœtes must provide us with the dress of Lydian taxiarchs."¹

"Why not with the ornaments of chiliarchs?" cried Gyges. "Your youthful appearance would arouse suspicions."

"We cannot appear as common soldiers."

"No, but as hecatontarchs."

"Very well," laughed Zopyrus, "if only I need not pretend to be a trader. We'll set out in three days. I'm glad I shall have time to secure the satrap's daughter and visit the grove of Cybele, for which I long. But now good night, Bartja. Mind you sleep long. What would Sappho say if you arrived with pale cheeks?"

¹ The taxiarch may be compared with a captain; the hecatontarch was leader of 100 men, and the chiliarch of 1,000.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE THREE FRIENDS IN EGYPT.

IT was an intensely hot day in Naucratis. The Nile had overflowed its banks, and covered the fields and gardens of Egypt with water. The harbours at the mouth of the stream were crowded with ships. Egyptian vessels, manned by Phœnician colonists from the Delta, brought delicate fabrics from Malta, metals and jewels from Sardinia, and wine and copper from Cyprus. Greek triremes brought fine oil and wine, mastix boughs, Chalcedonian bronze and woollen materials; Phœnician and Syrian vessels with gay sails brought copper, tin, purple stuffs, jewels, spices, glass, carpets, and cedars from Lebanon for building houses in Egypt, which was poor in wood. In exchange for their wares they obtained the treasures of Ethiopia, gold, ivory, ebony, tropical birds of gay plumage, jewels, and black slaves, but above all, the far-famed Egyptian corn, or chariots from Memphis, lace from Sais, and fine papyrus. The time of mere barter had ceased long ago, and the merchants of Naucratis often paid for their wares in silver coin and carefully weighed gold.

Great warehouses surrounded the harbour of the Greek town. Beside them stood lightly constructed houses to which the idle sailor was attracted by music, laughter, and the cries of painted women. Among the crowds of black and white slaves who bore heavy burdens on their back, staggered oarsmen and steersmen in various dresses. Captains in Greek, or gaudy Phœnician dresses, gave orders to their subordinates, and handed over their cargoes to the wholesale merchants.

Wherever a quarrel arose, the Egyptian police, with their long wands, and the Greek guardians of the harbour, ap-

pointed by the elders of the merchants in Naucratis, appeared at once on the scene.

Now the harbour grew empty, for the time of opening the market was approaching, and the free Greek was always unwilling to miss this. Many curious people stayed away this time, for a beautifully built Samian ship, with a long swan neck, the *Oceia*, on the prow of which was a wooden image of the goddess *Hera*, was just being unladen. Three handsome youths, in the dress of Lydian soldiers, who left the trireme, attracted much attention. Several slaves followed them and carried a few boxes and bundles after them.

The handsomest of the three, in whom the reader has already recognized our young friends *Darius*, *Zopyrus*, and *Bartja*, addressed a harbour guard and asked him to show them the way to the house of his friend *Theopompus* the *Milesian*.

Polite and obliging, like all Greeks, the official preceded the strangers, and led them across the market, which a bell had just announced as open, to a fine house, the property of the most respected man in Naucratis.

The youths had not passed through the market without delay. They had easily avoided the importunities of the bold fish sellers, and the invitations of the butchers, sellers of sausages and vegetables, the potters and bakers. When they approached the place of the flower-girls, *Zopyrus* clapped his hands loudly with delight at the charming scene. Three beautiful girls in semi-transparent white dresses with coloured borders sat, surrounded by flowers, on low benches, and wound a large garland of roses, violets, and orange blossoms. Their pretty heads, adorned by wreaths, resembled the three rosebuds which one of them, who first noticed our friends, held towards them.

"Buy my roses, handsome gentlemen," she cried, in a clear melodious voice, "and put them in the hair of your beloved."

Zopyrus took the flowers, and holding the girl's hand, returned: "I come from afar, beautiful child, and have as yet no love in Naucratis. Let me, therefore, place these roses in your golden hair, and this piece of gold in your small white hand."

The girl laughed with delight, showed the munificent gift to her sisters, and cried: "By Eros, youths like you cannot want friends. Are you brothers?"

"No."

"What a pity! we are sisters."

"And you think we should have made three handsome couples?"

"I may have thought it, but I did not say it."

"And your sisters?"

The girls laughed, seemed to have no objection to such friendship, and gave Bartja and Darius rosebuds.

The youths accepted the flowers, also gave a piece of gold, and were not allowed to leave the girls till green laurel wreaths had been wound round their helmets.

The news of the unusual generosity of the strangers had spread among the flower-girls, who, on all sides, sold ribbons, blossoms, and wreaths. Each showed her roses, and with look and word invited them to stay.

Zopyrus, like many of the young men of Naucratis, would have liked to tarry with the girls, who were nearly all distinguished by beauty and hearts easy to win. But Darius urged him to go on, and asked Bartja to forbid their thoughtless friend to remain any longer. They passed the tables of the money-changers and the citizens, who sat on stone benches and consulted in the open air, and reached Theopompus' house.

As soon as their Greek guide had knocked with the metal knocker, the door was opened by a slave. As the master of the house was still in the market, the porter, a servant, who had grown grey in the service of Theopompus, led the strangers into the andronitis and asked them to await his master's return.

While the youths were looking with admiration at the beautiful wall paintings and the artistic construction of the stone floor of the hall, Theopompus, the merchant whose acquaintance we made in Rhodopis' house, returned, accompanied by several slaves who carried the various articles he had bought in the market.

The Milesian greeted the strangers with graceful politeness, and asked what he could do for them.

After Bartja had convinced himself that no listener was

near, he handed the master of the house the letter which Phanes had given him on leaving.

Theopompus had scarcely read it when he bowed to the prince and cried: "By Zeus, the protector of hospitality, no greater honour could have befallen my house than your visit. Look on all that I have as your own, and ask your companions to put up with my house. Pardon me, if I did not recognize you in your Lydian dress. I think your curls are shorter and your beard is fuller than when you left Egypt. Am I right in thinking that you wish to remain unknown? As you please. The best hospitality is that which leaves the guest at liberty. Now I recognize your friends. But they, too, are greatly changed, and, like you, have cut their hair. I could almost swear that you, my friend, whose name I—"

"My name is Darius!"

"That you, Darius, have dyed your hair black. Yes? You see my memory does not deceive me. But I must not boast of it too much, for I saw you several times at Sais, as well as when you arrived and left. You ask, O prince, if others would know you. Certainly not. Your strange dress, and short hair, and painted eyebrows alter you entirely. But pardon me a minute. My doorkeeper calls me. He seems to have an important message."

After a few minutes Theopompus returned, and cried: "My friends, that is not the way to enter Naucratis if you wish to remain unknown. You have jested with flower-girls, and for a few roses paid them, not like fugitive Lydian hecatontarchs, but like the grand people you are. All Naucratis knows the beautiful, gay sisters, Stephanon, Chloris, and Irene, who bewitch many a young heart with their wreaths, and with their sweet looks have coaxed many a bright obolus out of the purses of our sons. The young men prefer to linger with the flower-girls at market time, and the bargains struck there are paid at night with many pieces of gold. But for a kind word and a few roses people are less generous than you. The girls have boasted of your gifts, and shown the shining gold to their stingier lovers. Rumour is a goddess who exaggerates too much, and makes a crocodile of a lizard. The Egyptian captain who has guarded the market since Psamtik has

governed us, heard that three Lydian warriors had scattered gold among the wreath binders. This aroused suspicion and caused the toparch to send an official hither to inquire who you are, and what has brought you to Egypt. I was therefore obliged to resort to stratagem and impose on the scout. I did as you wished, and said you were rich youths from Sardes, who had fled from the satrap's wrath. But here comes the clerk who will give you passports, so that you can remain unmolested on the Nile. I have promised him a great reward if he will help you to enlist among the king's mercenaries. He swallowed the bait and believes me. Your youth will prevent anyone from suspecting you of a secret mission."

The talkative Greek had scarcely finished when the clerk, a thin, white-robed man, placed himself opposite the strangers, and, with the assistance of an interpreter, asked whence they came and the object of their journey.

The youths kept to their assertion that they were fugitive Lydian hecatontarchs, and begged the official to tell them what they must do to join the Egyptian auxiliary troops, and to give them passports.

After Theopompus had become surety for the friends, the official did not hesitate long, but soon prepared the desired papers.

Bartja's passport was as follows:—

"Smerdis, son of Sandon, from Sardes, about twenty-two years old, of stately, slender figure, well-formed face, straight nose, and high forehead, with a small scar in the middle, may remain in Egypt wherever the law allows strangers to settle, since surety has been offered for him.

"In the king's name, Sachons, scribe."

The passports of Darius and Zopyrus were similar.

When the official had left the house, Theopompus rubbed his hands and said: "Now, if you follow my advice in all things, you can safely stay in this country. Preserve those scrolls as you would your eyes, and never part from them. Now I must ask you to come with me to breakfast, where, if it is agreeable to you, you can tell me if the rumour, which was spread abroad in the market, is as usual false. A trireme from Colophon brought news, Bartja, that your great brother was preparing to attack Amasis."

On the evening of the same day Bartja and Sappho met, and the joy of the meeting, heightened by the unexpected appearance of the prince, was so great, that in the first hour the maiden could find no words to express her delight and gratitude. When they were alone in the bower of jessamine, whose flowering boughs had sheltered their young love, Sappho sank on the breast of her lover. For a long while they did not speak, and saw neither moon nor stars which passed on their significant, silent course above their heads in the warm summer night. They did not hear the songs of the nightingale, which, as formerly, called to her beloved Itys. They did not feel the dew which the night poured on them as on the flowers in the grass.

At length Bartja seized both hands of his love, and gazed at her with ineffable joy, as though he wished to impress her image on his heart. She looked down shyly, till at last he cried: "When I dreamed of you, you seemed to me fairer than all that Auramazda had created, but now I see that your beauty surpasses my dreams."

A bright look thanked him for his words, and he again put his arm round her, drew her closer, and asked: "Did you think of me?"

"Of you only."

"And did you hope to see me again so soon?"

"Oh, every hour I thought: 'Now he must come.' When I entered the garden in the morning, and looked towards the east, towards your home, and when a little bird flew thence to me from the right side, when my right eyelid twitched,¹ when I cleared out my box, and found the wreath which became you so well, and which I kept in memory of you—Melitta says that wreaths preserved like this preserve true love,—then I clapped my hands, and thought, he must come to-day. I ran down to the Nile, and waved to every boat with my handkerchief, for I thought that every vessel was bearing you to me. When you did not come, I went back sadly, sang a song, and looked at the hearth-fire in the women's room, till my grandmother

¹ A bird flying from the right, and a twitching in the right eye, signified good fortune.

roused me from my dreams, and said: 'She who dreams in the day is in danger of not sleeping at night, and rising every morning with dulled mind, with weary brain, and languid limbs. Day was given us that we might wake, and keep our eyes open, and strive to let no hour pass in idleness. The past belongs to the dead; folly hopes for salvation from the future; the wise keep to the present, which is ever young, and profit by it, to cultivate by industry all the gifts which Zeus bestowed on us, and Apollo, Cypris, and Pallas gave us, so that gradually they increase, and perfect, and ennoble each other; and at last our thoughts, actions, emotions, and words become harmonious like the sweet tones of the lyre. You cannot better serve the man you think above you because you love him; you cannot show your fidelity more beautifully than by improving your mind and character as far as this lies in your power. Whatever you may learn that is good and beautiful will be a gift for your lover, for if you give yourself up to him, he will receive your virtues with you. But no one ever won a victory in dreams. Perspiration is the refreshing dew of the flower of virtue!' Thus she spoke. From the hearth I went ashamed, and seized my lute, and learned new songs, or hearkened unto my teacher who instructed me with love, in word and deed, for she surpasses most men in wisdom. Thus the time passed on—a quick stream, which like yon Nile flows for ever, and carries, now a gaily flagged golden boat, and now an evil, greedy crocodile, past us, the mortals."

"Now we are seated in the boat of bliss! I would that now the stream of time would stop! Oh, would that life could remain like this for ever! Lovely girl, how wisely you speak, how well you understand the beautiful lessons, and how gracefully you repeat them! My Sappho, I am proud of you, indeed. For in your virtue I possess a treasure which makes me richer than my lord and brother, to whom half of the universe belongs."

"You proud of me!—you, a great prince, the fairest, the noblest of your race?"

"I set no higher value on myself than that you think me worthy of your love."

"Great gods! how can my heart endure this deep bliss,

without breaking like a vase that has been filled too full with heavy gold?"

"Because another heart—mine—helps you to bear your burden, and because your soul supports mine. With your help I scorn the world, and all the suffering that the night brings forth."

"Oh, do not tempt the wrath and envy of the gods, who oft are vexed with mortals' joy. Since you went from us we have spent many an hour of bitter grief. Phanes' children—a boy as fair as Eros, and a girl as fresh and fair as tiny clouds that, lighted by the dawn, shine kindly on us—lived with us for many a day. Grandmother once again grew young and glad when she saw the two fresh, young children. But I, I gave them all my heart, although it all belongs to you alone. Our hearts are wonderfully formed—just like the sun, which sheds its light on many, and yet does not lose in splendour and in brightness, and keeps from none what is their due. I loved the children dearly. One evening we sat alone, with Theopompus in the women's room, when we heard a tumult at the door. Old Cnacias our slave just reached the door when the bolts were forced open, and a crowd of soldiers entered the peristyle, and the andronites, then burst open the middle door, and forced their way to us. Grandmother showed them the letter of Amasis, which had made our house a safe asylum. They laughed scornfully at the writing, and showed us an official document in which Prince Psamtik gave strict orders that Phanes' children should at once be delivered to these rough men. Theopompus reproved the soldiers for their violence, and said the children, who were our guests, came from Corinth, and had nothing to do with Phanes. The captain of the soldiers treated the noble man with scorn, insolently repulsed my anxious grandmother, forced his way into her chamber where, beside all manner of precious treasures, the two children slumbered peacefully at the head of her couch, tore them from their beds, and took them in an open boat in the cold night time to the royal town. In a few weeks the boy was dead. It is said Prince Psamtik murdered him. The pretty girl still pines in the dark cell of a gloomy dungeon, and weeps for her father and for us.

Tell me, my love, do you not think it hard that grief intrudes upon the purest joy. The tears of gladness mix with tears of grief. My lips that laughed but now have become the heralds of a deep and bitter woe."

"I feel your sorrow, dearest child, but cannot grieve in the same way as you. That which forces hot tears from your woman's eyes makes me clench my fist for a blow. The fair boy whom you loved, the little girl who weeps in her lone cell, shall soon be avenged. Trust me. Before the Nile rises a second time a mighty host will enter the land, and seek for retribution for the dead."

"Oh, dearest, how your eyes flash! I never saw you look so beautiful before. Yes, yes, the boy must be avenged, and none but you be his avenger."

"My gentle girl is turning to a warrior."

"Combat becomes a woman where wrong triumphs, and women, too, rejoice when vice has fallen. But tell me, is war declared?"

"Not yet; host after host is marching to the Euphrates valley, to join our chief army."

"Now my courage, so quickly aroused, sinks; I tremble at the mere word, war! How many mothers it makes childless, how many wives throw over their heads the widow's veil when Ares rages, and how many pillows are wet with tears when Pallas swings her dreadful ægis."

"But the man grows in wild combat, his heart expands, his arm becomes strong. How you will rejoice when your beloved hero returns victorious and crowned with fame. A Persian wife must glory in the fight. She loves her husband's life, but dearer far to her heart is her lord's glory."

"Go forth to fight, my prayers will shield you."

"And victory will fall to the right cause. First we will conquer the Pharaoh's host, and then we will free our Phanes' little child."

"And good Aristomachus, who received Phanes' place when he fled. He has vanished, no one knows whither. It is said that Psamtik put him in a dreadful dungeon because he threatened him on account of the children, or had him dragged to a distant mine, which is worse than the most dreadful death. The poor old man was banished

from his home by wicked foes, and through no fault of his. The very day which took him from our midst news came from Sparta to the Nile that Aristomachus, whose sons had brought great fame to Sparta, was recalled to the shores of the Eurotas with all the honours which the Greeks can confer. A ship wreathed with flowers awaited the man whom all praised, and the leader of the embassy was his own victorious son."

"I knew the strong old man who mutilated himself to escape disgrace that threatened him. We will avenge him by the Anahita star that, trembling there, sets in the east."

"Is it so late, my love? The time has flown like a soft breeze, that kisses our brow and passes on. Do you not hear them call? They wait for us. Before the dawn you must reach the town and the house of your noble host and friend. Farewell, my hero."

"Farewell, my love. The bridal songs will sound in five days more. You tremble, as at the mention of the war."

"I tremble at the greatness of our bliss, as we must tremble at all great things."

"Rhodopis calls again. Come, let us go. I have asked Theopompus to consult the matron, as is the custom, as to how and where our bridal can be celebrated. I will remain unknown in his house till I can lead you hence as my cherished wife."

"And I will follow you."

When, next morning, the youths were walking with their host in Theopompus' garden, Zopyrus cried: "All night I dreamed of nothing but your Sappho. Happy Bartja! Such a being was never created before. If Araspes saw her he would confess that Panthea was surpassed. My new wife at Sardes, whom I thought remarkably beautiful, now seems to me like an owl. Auramazda is wasteful. With Sappho's charms he could have made three beauties. How charming it sounded when she bade us good-night in Persian."

"During my absence," returned Bartja, "she tried to learn our language from a native of Susa, the wife of a

Babylonian trader in carpets, who lives in Naucratis, and she surprised me with this accomplishment, which she has taken such pains to acquire."

"She is a splendid girl," cried the merchant. "My late wife loved her as her own child, and would gladly have wedded her to our son, who is the head of my business at Miletus. But the gods willed it otherwise. My wife would have rejoiced if she could have seen the bridal wreaths on Rhodopis' door."

"Then it is your custom to deck the house of a bride with flowers?" asked Zopyrus.

"Certainly," returned Theopompus. "If you see a wreathed door you know that there is a betrothed maiden behind it. If you see an olive branch on a house a boy has been born there, but if you see a woollen scarf over the door a girl has seen the light. A pail of water before the door shows that you approach a house of mourning. But the market time draws near. My friends, I must leave you. Matters of importance summon me."

"I will accompany you," cried Zopyrus, "and order wreaths for Sappho's house."

"Aha!" laughed the Milesian. "You long for the flower-girls. O, your denial will not avail you. If you like you can accompany me, but I must ask you to be less generous than yesterday, and to remember your disguise, which may easily become a source of danger if certain news of the threatened war should arrive."

The Greek summoned his slave to fasten on his sandals, and, accompanied by Zopyrus, went to the market-place, whence he returned in a few hours. Important events had evidently occurred, for Theopompus was unusually grave when he returned to the friends.

"I found the whole town in great excitement," he began, "for there is a rumour that Amasis is dangerously ill. As we stood together in the exchange¹ transacting our business, and I was about to receive large sums for the rapid sale of my goods, which had risen very much in price—I intend to use the money to buy new goods when the

¹ The Greek merchants sold their goods by sample on the so-called *δᾱγμα* of the exchange.

certain prospect of war makes prices fall; my early acquaintance with your great brother's armaments will be very useful to me—the toparch appeared in our midst and said that Amasis was not only dangerously ill, but was given up by all his physicians. We must be prepared at any minute for the king's death and for grave events. The death of this king is the greatest loss which could befall the Greeks, for he was always our friend and favoured us, while his son is the declared foe of the Greeks, and will do all in his power to force us to leave Egypt. He hates Naucratis and our temples. If his father had not prevented it, and if he did not urgently need the Greek mercenaries, he would long ago have banished us, the hated foreigners, from his realm. When Amasis dies, all Naucratis will rejoice at the approach of Cambyses' army, for the events at home have taught us, that you can respect those who are not Persians, and protect their rights."

"I will see that my brother confirms your former privileges," said Bartja, "and grants you new ones."

"I hope he will soon enter Egypt," cried the Greek. "We know that as soon as he can, Psamtik will order us to pull down our temples, which he hates. He long ago stopped the building of a new temple at Memphis."

"But we saw splendid temples here when we came from the harbour," said Darius.

"We have several temples. But here comes Zopyrus with my slaves, carrying a perfect forest of garlands behind him. He is laughing, and must have passed a pleasant time with the flower-girls. Good-day, friend, the sad news which fills all Naucratis does not seem to affect you."

"I wish Amasis a hundred years of life," cried Zopyrus. "But if he dies, they will have other things to attend to beside us. When are you going to Rhodopis' house?"

"As soon as it is dark."

"Then offer the noble matron these flowers as a gift from me. I never thought that an old woman would delight me so. Every word she utters sounds like music, and though it be grave and wise, charms the ear like a jest. I do not care to accompany you this time, Bartja, for I

should only be in your way. What do you intend to do, Darius?"

"I should not like to lose a chance of talking to Rhodopis."

"I do not wonder. You must know and learn everything while I try to enjoy everything. Will you grant me leave of absence, my friends? You see—"

"I know," Bartja interrupted the frivolous youth, laughing. "Till now you have only seen the flower-girls by day, and would like to know what they look like by lamplight."

"That's it," cried Zopyrus, looking grave. "In this respect, I am as curious as Darius."

"May you enjoy yourself with the three sisters."

"Not so. Only with Stephanion, the youngest."

Dawn had broken when Bartja, Darius, and Theopompus left Rhodopis' house. A noble Greek, Syloson by name, brother of Polycrates, who had been banished by the tyrant, had spent the evening with them and returned in their company to Naucratis, where he had lived for some years.

This man, whose brother, though he had exiled him, supplied him plentifully with money, kept the most festive house in Naucratis, and was as famous for his extravagance as for his skill and strength. Syloson was also distinguished in a high degree by beauty and splendour of dress. All the youths of Naucratis made a point of imitating the cut and arrangement of the folds of his garments. He was independent and unoccupied, and many of his evenings were spent in Rhodopis' house; she numbered him among her most intimate friends, and had told him her grandchild's secret.

That evening it was arranged that the wedding should be celebrated in four days, quietly and in secret. Bartja had already eaten the quince¹ with his love, who on the same day solemnly sacrificed to Zeus, Hera, and the other deities who protect marriage, and thus formally betrothed

¹ According to Plutarch, Solon 20, one of the laws of Solon enjoined on all brides in Athens to eat a quince, which seems to have possessed significance for lovers, before the wedding.

himself to her. Syloson undertook to provide singers of the epithalamium and torch-bearers. The feast was to be held at Theopompus' house, which represented the bridegroom's. The splendid wedding gifts of the prince had already been given to Rhodopis. Bartja refused Sappho's large inheritance and gave it to Rhodopis, who firmly refused to accept it.

Syloson accompanied the friends to Theopompus' house, and was about to take leave of them when they heard a loud noise in the silent street, and soon after the Egyptian guard came up with a man in fetters, whom they were taking to prison. The prisoner seemed very angry, and became more violent in proportion to the increasing indifference of the guards to his broken Greek, and the oaths he uttered in a foreign tongue.

Bartja and Darius no sooner heard the prisoner's voice, than they hurried up and recognized Zopyrus.

Syloson and Theopompus at once stopped the guard, and asked the captain what the prisoner had done. The captain knew the Milesian and Polycrates' brother, whose faces were familiar to every child in Naucratis; he bowed, and said that the stranger had committed murder.

Theopompus took him aside and offered him a large bribe if he would set the prisoner at liberty, but he only succeeded in obtaining permission to speak to his guest.

When the friends stood by Zopyrus, they begged him to tell them quickly what had happened. They learned that at nightfall the thoughtless youth had visited the flower-girl Stephanion, had remained with her till early dawn and then left her. He had scarcely closed the door, when he was attacked by several young men who had probably been lying in wait for him. He had already quarrelled in the morning with one of them who called himself Stephanion's betrothed. The girl had sent away her troublesome wooer from her flowers, and thanked Zopyrus when he threatened to strike the importunate man. As soon as the Achæmenide was attacked, he drew his sword and easily put to flight his enemies, who were merely armed with sticks. Unfortunately he seriously wounded the jealous man, who had attacked him impetuously, and now

fell to the ground. Meanwhile the guard had come up and tried to arrest Zopyrus, whose victim was uttering lamentable cries of "Murderer and robber!" but he did not prove willing to give up his freedom so easily. Spurred on by the threatened danger, and eager for the fray, the Persian rushed at the police with upraised sword, and would have broken through them if a second guard had not come up and, joining the first, renewed the attack. He raised his sword again, and this time clove in twain the head of an Egyptian. A second blow wounded a soldier in the arm; when he was about to strike again, he suddenly felt that a noose had been thrown round his neck, and was being drawn tighter and tighter. He soon lost consciousness. When he recovered he was in chains, and in spite of his passport and his reference to Theopompus, he was obliged to follow the guard.

When he had finished his account, the Milesian expressed his displeasure, and assured him that his untimely love of fighting might have serious consequences. Then he turned to the captain again and offered to become surety for the prisoner. The captain decidedly refused every offer, and declared that leniency to the murderer would cost him his life, for in Egypt there was a law that threatened with death any man who concealed a murder. He must, he continued, take the criminal to Sais, at once, and there deliver him up to the nomarch for punishment. "He has," he added, "killed an Egyptian, and must be sentenced by an Egyptian high court of justice. In every other case I am at your service."

During his speech Zopyrus spoke to his friends and begged them not to trouble themselves about him. "I swear, by Mithra," he cried, when Bartja assured him that they would confess who they were, in order to obtain his freedom, "that I will plunge my sword into my heart without a moment's thought if, for my sake, you give yourselves up to these Egyptian dogs. The rumour of the coming war has already spread over the town. As soon as Psamtik hears what precious birds are in his net, he will not consider long, but will close the net and keep you as hostages. Auramazda grant you salvation, blessing, and purity. Farewell, friends, and think sometimes of cheerful

Zopyrus, who lived for fighting and love, and died for love and fighting.”

Meanwhile the captain had placed himself at the head of the procession and given his men the order to march.

A few minutes later Zopyrus had disappeared from his friends' sight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WEDDING.

ACCORDING to the Egyptian law, Zopyrus was certain to be condemned to death.

As soon as the friends heard this, they resolved to go to Sais and try to free the prisoner. Syloson, who was known there and could speak Egyptian, offered of his own accord to accompany them.

Bartja and Darius, disguised by their dyed hair and eyebrows, and broad-brimmed felt hats, so that even their friends could not recognize them, and in simple Greek dresses provided by Theopompus, met Syloson, who was in rich attire, on the shores of the Nile an hour after Zopyrus' arrest, and entered a boat belonging to their new friend, and manned by his slaves. After a short journey, aided by a favourable wind, they reached Sais, which stood in the midst of the flooded fields like an island, before the sun had reached its midday height.

They landed at a distant spot, and came first to the quarter of the workmen who, in spite of the great noonday heat, were working busily.

In the open court of a baker's house were journeymen who were kneading the coarse dough with their feet, the fine with their hands. Loaves of various shapes were taken out of the ovens, round and oval cakes, rolls in the shape of sheep, snails, and hearts were laid in baskets. Active lads placed three, four, or five of these baskets on their heads, and carried them quickly and safely to customers in other parts of the town. A butcher was killing an ox, whose legs were bound, in front of his house; while his men sharpened their knives on the grindstone, to cut up a wild goat. Merry shoemakers were calling to the passers-by from

their shops, and carpenters, tailors, joiners, and weavers were working industriously.

The wives of the workmen, leading naked children by the hand, left their houses to do their shopping, while a few soldiers approached a purveyor of wine and beer, who sold his intoxicating drinks in the open street.

Our friends paid little heed to the bustle around them, and silently followed Syloson, who asked them to wait for him by the guard-house of the Greek mercenaries.

The Samian chanced to know the taxiarch on duty, and inquired of him if he had heard of a murderer who had been brought from Naucratis to Sais.

"Certainly," returned the Greek. "He arrived barely half an hour ago. A purse full of gold was found in his belt, and he was therefore taken for a Persian spy. I suppose you know that Cambyses is preparing an army to attack Egypt?"

"Impossible!"

"It is certain. The Pharaoh knows it already. Arabian merchants, whose caravan reached Pelusium yesterday, brought the news."

"Which may be as false as the suspicion against the Lydian. I know him very well, and am sorry for the poor lad. He belongs to one of the wealthiest Sardian families, fled thence because he had quarrelled with the Persian satrap Oroetes, and was pursued by his mighty enemy. I will tell you the details of the story when you visit me at Naucratis. Of course, you will stay in my house for a few days, and bring your friends. My brother has sent me some wine from Samos, which surpasses everything you have ever tasted. I only allow a delicate palate like yours to enjoy this divine drink."

The taxiarch's face brightened, and seizing Syloson's hand, he cried: "By the dog, friend, we will not keep you waiting, and will attack your skins gallantly. What do you say to inviting Archidice, the three flower sisters, and a couple of flute-players to the feast?"

"They shall be there. That reminds me that the poor young Lydian is a prisoner for the sake of the flower sisters. A jealous churl, aided by several companions,

attacked him in front of her house. My fiery Lydian defended himself—”

“And struck his foe to the earth?”

“So that he will never rise again.”

“The boy must have a strong fist.”

“He had a sword.”

“All the better for him.”

“No, all the worse, for his victim was an Egyptian.”

“That’s a foolish affair, which may turn out badly. A stranger who kills an Egyptian is as certain of death as if he had the halter round his neck. But, at all events, he will have a few days’ respite. The priests are all engaged with prayers for the dying king, and have no time to hold a court of justice.”

“I would give much if I could help the poor boy. I knew his father.”

“Yes, and he did not do more than his duty. A man cannot submit to being thrashed.”

“Do you know in which prison the poor fellow is?”

“Yes. The great prison is being rebuilt, so for the present he has been put in the store-house which separates the chief guard-room of the Egyptian bodyguard from the grove of the temple of Neith. I was just coming home, and saw the poor fellow taken there.”

“He is bold and strong. Do you think he could escape if he were helped?”

“No. The place where he was put is two stories high, and its only window looks on the grove of the goddess, which, as you know, is surrounded by walls ten feet high, and guarded like a treasury. There are double guards at all the doors. The only place where, of course, there are no sentinels during the floods is where the wall is washed by the Nile. These worshippers of animals are cautious as wagtails.”

“That’s a pity. Then we must leave the poor fellow to his fate. Farewell, Dæmones, and come soon to my house.”

The Samian left the guard-room, and returned to his friends who were waiting for him impatiently, and listened eagerly to his report.

When the Greek had finished his account of the

prison, Darius cried: "I think with a little courage we can save him. He is agile as a cat, and strong as a bear. I have formed a plan."

"What is it?" asked Syloson. "I must tell you that I, too, am not without hope."

"We will buy rope-ladders, string, and a good bow, put everything in a boat, and when it is dark we will go to the unguarded part of the temple wall. You must help me to climb over. I will take the things we bought, utter the eagle's cry, which Zopyrus will recognize at once, as since childhood we have used it to call each other, shoot the arrow with the string into his room—I never miss,—call to my friend to put a weight on the end of the string, and let it down. I will fasten the rope-ladder to the string, Zopyrus will pull it up, twist it round the iron nail, which must, of course, be sent up with the ladder, for we cannot tell whether there will be anything in his cell to fasten it to; he will descend, hasten with me to the place where the boat waits, climb the wall with the help of a second rope-ladder which must hang there, leap into the boat, and thus escape."

"Capital!" cried Bartja.

"But very dangerous," added Syloson. "If we are caught in the sacred grove, we shall be severely punished. The priests celebrate special secret festivals there at night from which all who are not initiated are strictly excluded. But the lake in the grove is said to be the scene of these mysteries and that is some distance from Zopyrus' prison."

"All the better," cried Darius. "But now for the most important matter. We must send to Theopompus at once and ask him to hire a swift trireme for us, and prepare it for the journey. The news of Cambyzes' preparations has already arrived; we shall be taken for spies, and Zopyrus and his liberators will be closely pursued. It would therefore be wrong to expose ourselves to unnecessary danger. Bartja, you must take the message and marry Sappho this very day, for, whatever happens, we must leave Naucratis to-morrow. Do not object, my friend, my brother. You know that you would be an idle spectator of the rescue, which can only be undertaken by one.

I originated the plan and will not let anyone else carry it out. We shall meet again to-morrow; Auramazda protects the friendship of the pure."

For a long while Bartja refused to desert his companions, but yielding at last to their united prayers and representations, went to the river to hire a boat to take him to Naucratis, while Syloson and Darius bought the materials for Zopyrus' flight.

Bartja was obliged to pass the temple of Neith in order to reach the place where the boats lay for hire. It was not easy, for the people crowded round the entrance of the temple. When Bartja had forced his way to the obelisks standing by the gate of the temple which was decked with winged discs and fluttering flags, he was stopped by the priests, who were clearing the broad path that led to the avenue of sphinxes. The great doors of the pylon opened and Bartja, who against his will was forced into the foremost row of spectators, saw a splendid procession leave the temple. He was attracted by the unexpected sight of so many faces which he had formerly known, and scarcely heeded the loss of his broad-brimmed hat, which was torn from him in the crush. From the conversation of two Ionian mercenaries behind him, he learned that the family of Amasis had been in the temple to pray, and offer up sacrifices for the dying king.

Richly dressed priests in panther skins and long white robes came first. Then came court officials with golden wands, on the tops of which were peacocks' feathers and silver lotus flowers. They were followed by Pastophors¹ bearing a golden cow, the animal of Isis, on their shoulders. When the crowd had bowed before the holy emblem, the queen approached in the robes of a priestess, wearing a rich headdress with the winged disc and the Uraeus snakes on her head, and carrying lotus flowers in her right hand, and in her left a gold sistrum,² the sound of which was to banish the demons of evil. She was followed by the wife, daughter,

¹ The priests who carried the sacred pictures, images of the deities, &c., in the processions.

² An instrument used at divine service. It consisted of a bow, from which rings hung on sticks, which were jingled together.

and sister of the chief priest in similar but less costly garments. Next came the crown prince in rich festive robes. Behind him four white-robed young priests carried an open litter in which reclined Tachot, daughter of Ladice and Amasis, and reputed sister of Nitetis. The girl's cheeks were slightly flushed by the summer heat and the intensity of her devotions. Her blue eyes were filled with tears, and fixed on the sistrum, which her thin weak hands could scarcely hold.

A murmur of sympathy broke from the crowd which clung with affection to the dying king and rendered to his suffering daughter the pity which is so easily bestowed on the young in sickness, especially when they seemed born for greatness and dignity. Many an eye grew dim when the beautiful invalid appeared and Tachot seemed to notice the sympathy of the crowd, for she raised her eyes from the sistrum and looked graciously and with gratitude at the people. Suddenly the colour faded from her cheeks, she turned white and the golden instrument fell from her hands on to the pavement, close to Bartja's feet. The youth felt that he had been recognized, and reflected whether he had not better hide behind his neighbours. He only hesitated for a second, then the chivalrous mind of the young hero overcame his prudence. Quick as thought he sprang towards the sistrum, and regardless of the risk of recognition, presented it to the princess.

Tachot looked at him questioningly before she relieved him of his golden burden. Then she whispered so that he alone heard her: "Are you Bartja? By your mother I ask you, are you Bartja?"

"I am," he answered as softly. "Bartja, your friend."

He could say no more, for the attendants pushed him back among the crowd. When he resumed his place he saw that Tachot, whose bearers were again following the procession, looked back at him once more. Her cheeks were flushed, and her bright eyes sought his. He did not avoid her look, but stooped once more to pick up a lotus bud which she threw at his feet, and then forced his way through the crowd, whose attention his hasty action had attracted.

A quarter of an hour later he was in the boat which was

to carry him to Sappho and his wedding. His anxiety about Zopyrus had vanished. He already looked on him as saved. In spite of the danger which threatened him, his heart was filled with strange satisfaction, he himself knew not why.

Meanwhile the princess had returned home; the festal robes, which oppressed her, were taken off, and she was placed on a couch on a balcony of the palace, where she preferred to be during the hot summer days, sheltered by plants and a tent-like awning.

From this place she could overlook the court of the palace, which was planted with trees, and which to-day was crowded with priests, courtiers, the commanders of the armies and of the nomes. There was a look of anxious expectation on every face for the hour of Amasis' death was drawing near.

Tachot, herself unnoticed, heard, with feverish attention much of what was being said and discussed below.

Now that there was every reason to dread the king's death, even the priests were full of his praise. They praised the wisdom and boldness of his new creations, the circumspection of his measures, his unwearied industry, his moderation, the keenness of his wit.

"How the prosperity of Egypt has increased under his rule," said a nomarch. "What fame he brought us by his conquest of Cyprus, and his war with the Libyans!" cried a captain. "How beautifully he adorned our temples, and how greatly he honoured the goddess of Sais!" added a minstrel of Neith. "How condescending and gracious he was!" murmured a courtier. "How well he managed to keep peace with the great states!" said the chief scribe; while the treasurer wiped away a tear, and cried: "How wisely he dealt with the revenues of the country! The treasury has not been so full since the time of Ramses II." "Psamtik can look forward to a rich inheritance," murmured the courtier; while the warrior cried: "But he will scarcely use it for glorious wars. The prince submits to the priests entirely." "You are mistaken," returned the minstrel, "for some time our master has seemed to despise the advice of his most faithful servants." "After such a father," cried the nomarch, "it will be hard to gain

universal approval. Not everyone possesses the great intellect, the luck, or the wisdom of Amasis." "The gods know that," murmured the warrior.

Tachot heard their words, and wept freely. What had till now been concealed from her was confirmed—she was soon to lose her beloved father.

After she had tried to grasp the terrible certainty, and in vain begged her attendants to take her to her father's couch, she withdrew her attention from the conversation of the courtiers, and looked at the sistrum which Bartja had put into her hand, and which she had taken with her on to the balcony, as though it gave her comfort. And she found what she sought, for it seemed to her as though the sound of the golden rings of the instrument carried her out of the world into a sunny region. The swoon-like languor to which consumptive people are subject came upon her, and cheered her last hours with sweet dreams.

The slaves who kept the flies from the sleeper with their fans asserted afterwards that Tachot had never looked more lovely.

She had lain thus for about an hour, when her breathing grew deeper. She coughed slightly, and blood trickled from her lips on to her white dress. The sleeper awoke, and looked around with surprise and disappointment. When she saw her mother, Ladice, who came on to the balcony at that moment, she smiled again, and said: "Oh, mother, I have had such a sweet dream!"

"Then the visit to the temple did my beloved child good?" asked the queen, who noticed with terror the blood on her daughter's lips.

"Yes, mother, yes. I have seen him again."

Ladice looked with alarm at her daughter's attendants, as though to ask: "Is your poor mistress's mind also afflicted?"

Tachot saw the look, and said with feverish excitement: "You think I am delirious, mother. But, indeed, I not only saw him, I also spoke to him. He put the sistrum into my hand, and said he was my friend. Then he took my lotus flower, and vanished in the crowd. Do not look at me so anxiously, and with such astonishment, mother.

I am speaking the truth, and am not dreaming. There, you hear, Tent-rut saw him too. I am sure he has come to Sais for my sake; and the child oracle in the court of the temple did not deceive me. Now I no longer feel ill, and I dreamed I lay in a blooming poppy field, red as the bright blood of sacrificial lambs. Bartja sat by me, and Nitetis knelt beside us, and played beautiful songs on a nabla of ivory.¹ And there were sounds in the air that made me feel as though Horus, the god of dawn, of spring, and of the resurrection, kissed me. I tell you, mother, he will come soon, and when I am well, then— Oh, mother, I am dying!”

Ladice knelt by her daughter's side, and pressed burning kisses on the maiden's closed eyes. An hour later she stood by another couch—her husband's deathbed.

The king's face was distorted by acute suffering, cold perspiration covered his brow, and his hands clutched the golden lions that formed the arms of the deep invalid chair in which he rested.

When Ladice entered the room he opened his eyes, which still sparkled with keen intelligence, in spite of their late blindness.

“Why did you not bring Tachot to me?” he asked, dryly.

“She is very ill, and suffers so that—”

“She is dead. All is well with her, for death is no punishment, but the chief goal of life, the only goal to which we can attain without difficulty; but the gods know with how much suffering. Ra will take her home in his boat with those who are faithful to him; and Osiris will receive her, for she is innocent. Nitetis, too, is dead. Where is Nebenchari's letter? There it is: ‘She killed herself, and died cursing you and yours. This news, which is true as my hate for you, is sent you by the poor, exiled, despised, and robbed oculist from Babylon to Egypt.’

“Listen to these words, Psamtik, and let your dying father assure you that every wrong act which brings you a drachma of pleasure on earth will be repaid you at your death with a talent of despair. For Nitetis' sake, terrible misfortunes

¹ Ancient Egyptian harp.

will come over Egypt. The news brought by the Arabian merchants is true. Cambyzes is arming against us, and will attack Egypt like the burning wind of the desert. Much that I have created, and for which I gave up sleep and strength, will be destroyed. But still I have not lived in vain, for forty years I have been the anxious father and the benefactor of a great people. Distant descendants will utter Amasis' name as that of a great and wise king, who loved mankind; and on my buildings at Sais and Thebes they will read the founder's name with admiration, and will praise the greatness of his power. Osiris and the twenty-four judges of the Nether World will not condemn me, and the goddess of truth, the mistress of the scales,¹ will find that my good deeds outweigh my evil ones."

The king sighed, and was silent for a long time. At last he looked at his wife with deep affection, and said: "Ladice, you have been a faithful, virtuous wife to me. I thank you, and ask your pardon for much. We often misunderstood each other. It was easier for me to understand your people than for you to understand the Egyptians. You know how greatly I esteemed the wisdom of your countrymen, and how I loved to associate with your friend Pythagoras, who had penetrated so deeply into all that we know and believe, and had accepted much with pleasure. He who valued the deep significance of doctrines, which seem to me holier than all else, took care not to scoff at the wisdom which the priests hide too anxiously, perhaps, from the people. The people submit willingly to what they cannot grasp, and to those who instruct them; but would it not be better and nobler to teach men to understand the truth, and to elevate them, instead of degrading them? It is true the priests would find less obedient servants, but the gods would find readier, worthier worshippers. Ladice, you found it most difficult to reconcile yourself to the worship of animals; but I think it would be better, and more worthy of man, to worship the Creator in his works than in stone images. Besides, your gods are subject to all human weaknesses; indeed, I should

¹ The goddess of truth weighs the souls of the dead in the Nether World. Hence her name, "Mistress of the Scales."

have made my queen unhappy if I had lived the life of Zeus."

At these words the king smiled. Then he continued: "Do you know the reason? The Greeks prefer beauty of form to all else; and so they cannot part the soul from the body, which they think the most beautiful form of all; they declare that a beautiful soul must dwell in a beautiful body. Their gods are, therefore, merely glorified men, while we recognize the Deity in nature and in ourselves as an immaterial force. Between this power and man are the animals, who do not act, as we do, according to the letter of the law, but according to the eternal law of nature. The former was merely imagined by man, and the latter owes its origin to the Deity. Who among us strives for liberty and the highest good as animals do? Who lives as uniformly from generation to generation, without teaching or counsel, as they do?"

Here the king's voice failed him, but he continued, after a pause: "I feel that the end is approaching, therefore, enough of these things. My son and successor, let me tell you my last will. Act in accordance with it, for experience speaks to you. But, alas! I have seen hundreds of times in my long life that the advice of others is futile. No man may gain experience for another. We become careful by our own loss; we become wise by what we learn ourselves. You ascend the throne in mature years, and have had time enough to reflect on right and wrong, good and evil, and to see and compare things of every description. I will, therefore, give you no general advice, but will confine myself to some useful counsel. I give it to you with my right hand, but I fear you will take it with the left.

"Above all, you must know that during these last few months, in spite of my blindness, I was only apparently indifferent to your proceedings, and intentionally left you free play. Rhodopis once told me a fable of her teacher, *Æsop*. A traveller met a man, and asked him how long he would take before he reached the next town. 'Go on,' was the answer. 'But first I want to know when I shall reach the town.' 'Go on, go on!' The traveller went on, swearing. After he had gone on a few steps, the man he

abused called after him : ' You will need an hour to reach the town. I could not answer your question till I saw how fast you walked ! '

" I remembered this fable, and in silence observed your method of governing, in order to tell you whether you went too slowly or too quickly. Now I know what I wished to learn, and in addition to my advice, I bid you : ' Test everything yourself. ' It is the duty of everyone, especially of a king, to make himself acquainted with all that concerns those for whose weal he must care. My son, you see too much with the eyes of others ; you hear too much with other ears. You go too little to the original source. Your advisers, the priests, wish only what is best, but—Neithotep, pray leave us alone for a moment. "

As soon as the chief priest had gone, the king cried : " They want what is good, but only what they think good. But we are not the kings of priests and nobles, but the rulers of the people. Do not, therefore, attend solely to the advice of that proud caste, but convince yourself, read all petitions yourself, and choose faithful nomarchs, who will submit to you, and who are loved by the people. It is what the Egyptians need, what they hope for, and must have. If you know exactly how matters stand in the realm, then it will be easy to rule. Choose only the best officials. I cared for the proper division of the land ; our laws are good, and time has proved that they are so. Keep to them, and trust no one who pretends to be wiser than the law, for, I assure you, law is always and everywhere wiser than the individual ; and he who transgresses it is worthy of punishment. No one knows that better than the people, who sacrifice themselves for us more cheerfully, in proportion to the readiness with which we sacrifice our personal wishes to the law. You do not love the people. Their voice is wont to be rough, it is true, but it usually expresses sound views ; it knows no lie, and no one needs truth more than a king. The Pharaoh who obeys priests and courtiers most readily will hear most flattery ; he who tries to carry out the desires of the people will have to suffer much from those around, but his heart will be satisfied, and posterity will praise him. I have often done wrong in my life, and yet the Egyptians will weep for me, for I

knew their wants, and was anxious for their welfare, like a father. It is easy and pleasant for a king who knows his duty to gain the love of the people; it is a thankless task to gain the applause of the nobles, and impossible to satisfy both parties.

“Always remember—I must repeat this—that you and the priests are there for the sake of the people, not the people for you and the priests. Honour religion for its own sake, and because it is the real support of the obedience of the nation to its king, but show its teachers that you look on them, not as vessels, but as servants of the deity. They have known how to place themselves above the Deity in the minds of the people, and made the Egyptians obedient slaves of the priesthood rather than servants of the gods. This work of theirs, which has lasted for ages, no ruler can undo; but we can check them when they try to subordinate the life of the state to their individual aims. Believe me, my son, the priests are ready at any time, as soon as they see the power of their caste endangered, to injure—even to destroy—the weal of the community.

“Keep to what is old, as the law commands, but never close your country against what is new, if it is an improvement. Wrongdoers easily break from the old; fools think what is strange and new is alone desirable; narrow-minded people, or selfish owners of privilege, cling firmly to what is old, and call progress a sin. Wise men try to keep what the past has proved to be good, to do away with what has become injurious, and to adopt what is useful, wherever it comes from. Act in accordance with that maxim, my son. The priests will try to urge you back, the Greeks to urge you forwards. Keep to one party or the other, but beware of standing in the middle, and of yielding to-day to the one, to-morrow to the other. He who tries to sit on two stools will end by sitting on the ground. Let one party be your friend, the other your enemy, for if you try to keep friendly with both, both will soon be your enemies. It is the nature of people to hate those who show kindness to their foes.

“During these last months, while you ruled independently, your unfortunate vacillation offended both parties. He who now advances, now goes back, like the children,

reaches the goal too late, and grows weary before his time. I kept with the Greeks, and opposed the priests till I felt my end approach. The brave, clever Greeks seemed particularly useful for the active business of life, but for death, I need those who give passports to the Nether World. May the gods pardon me, that even in dying, I cannot close my lips against such frivolous words. They made me what I am, and must take me as I am. I rubbed my hands when I became king, may you lay your hand on your heart, when you ascend the throne. Summon Neithotep, I must say something to you both."

When the chief priest stood beside him, the king held out his hand to him and said: "I part from you without anger, though I think that you know better how to fulfil your duty as a priest, than as a son of your country, and servant of your king. I think Psamtik will obey you more readily than I did. But I must impress this on both of you. Do not discharge the Greek mercenaries, till with their help you have fought and, I hope, conquered the Persians. My former prophecies are of no value. We are less sanguine when we are about to die. You will be hopelessly lost without the auxiliary troops; with their help it may be possible for the Egyptian army to conquer. Be wise and show the Ionians that on the Nile they are fighting for their own homes. Cambyses, if victorious, will not be content with Egypt, but the defeat of the Persians may bring liberty to the subjected Ionians. I knew you would agree with me, Neithotep, for you really desire what is best for Egypt's welfare. Now read me the sacred prayers. I feel very exhausted. It will soon be over. I wish I could forget poor Nitetis. Had she a right to curse us? May Osiris and the judges of the dead have mercy on our souls. Sit here, Ladice, and lay your hand on my forehead. Psamtik, swear in the presence of these witnesses, to esteem your step-mother, and honour her as though you were her own child. Poor wife, you must soon follow me to Osiris. What will you do on earth without husband and children? We brought up Nitetis as our own daughter, and yet we are heavily punished for her sake. But her curse falls on us alone, not on you, Psamtik, nor on your children. Bring my grandchildren. the boy and girl.

I think that was a tear. Well, we usually find it hardest to part from the little things we have grown used to."

A new guest had arrived that evening at Rhodopis' house, Callias, son of Phænippus, whom we met when he described the Olympic games.

The cheerful Athenian had just returned from his home, and had been received with joy as an old and trusted friend, by the matron who initiated him into the secret of the house. Cnacias, the old slave, had, it is true, taken down the flag, during the last two days, but he knew that Callias was always welcome to his mistress, and he therefore admitted him to her presence as readily as he would have refused every other visitor.

The Athenian had a great deal to tell, and when Rhodopis had left them on business, he took Sappho, his favourite into the garden, in order, amid teasing and jest, to watch with her for her eagerly-expected lover. When the time passed, and he was still absent, and the maiden began to grow anxious, he called old Melitta, who looked towards Naucratis almost more anxiously than her mistress, and asked her to fetch the lyre he had brought, into the garden.

After he had handed the girl the beautiful, somewhat large lyre, of gold and ivory, he said: "Divine Anacreon, the inventor of this instrument, had this one made at my desire. He calls it *barbiton*,¹ and produces wonderful sounds from it, which will continue to vibrate in the land of shadows. I told your story to the poet, whose life is a great sacrifice offered to the Muses, Eros, and Dionysius, and promised to bring you as a gift from him this little poem, which he composed for you. Listen:—

"The daughter of Tantalus stands
A rock in the Phrygian wild,
As a swallow to distant lands,
Once fluttered Pandion's child.

"And it's, oh that I were a glass,
That you always might gaze on me,
And it's, oh that my soul to a dress might pass,
To be constantly worn by thee.

¹ *Barbiton*, a stringed instrument larger than the ordinary lyre. Anacreon accompanied his songs on this instrument, and is said to have invented it.

"If you could but bathe therein,
I would water's shape assume,
With perfumes you scent your skin,
I would turn to a sweet perfume.

"A girdle to bind your waist,
Or a pearl at your throat would I be,
And I'd turn to the shoe which is happily placed
On thy feet to be trod by thee."¹

"Are you angry with the bold singer?"

"How can I be? We must allow poets to take liberties."

"And such a poet."

"Who chooses so excellent a singer to bring his song."

"Flatterer. Yes, when I was twenty years younger my voice and execution were rightly famed, but now—"

"You want to obtain more praise, but you shall force nothing further from me. I would like to know whether this barbiton, as you call it, with its soft notes, is suited for other songs than those of Anacreon?"

"Certainly. Take the plectrum² and try yourself to strike its strings, which are certainly a little hard for your delicate fingers to manage."

"I cannot sing. I am too anxious about Bartja."

"Or, in other words, you feel that longing deprives you of your voice. Do you know the song of your Lesbian ancestress, great Sappho, which pictures the mood in which you probably find yourself now?"

"I think not."

"Then listen. Formerly I tried to gain applause with this song, which seems to have been composed not by a woman, but by Eros himself."

"That happy man, it seems to me,
The equal of the gods must be,
Who can sit down and gaze on thee,
And hear thee speaking,
And laughing softly: for my part,
Thereat too fast would beat my heart,
For when I see thee, words depart,
And leave me choking.

¹ Anacreon, ed. Melhorn χβ'. Translated by J Barwick Hodge, Esq.

² A small ivory stick used to strike the strings.

“My lips are dumb; a subtle flame
 Seems to run swiftly o’er my frame,
 My eyes are blind, and, peerless dame,
 My ears keep singing;
 The sweat pours down me followed by
 A tremor, and I nearly die,
 The grass is not so pale as I
 Appear to others.”¹

“Well, what do you think of this song? By Hercules, child, you have grown quite pale. Did the song move you so, or are you only agitated by the faithful description of your loving heart. Compose yourself. Who can tell what is keeping your lover?”

“Nothing, nothing at all,” cried a cheerful voice at this moment, and in another instant Sappho was in her lover’s arms. Callias looked on in silence, and smiled with pleasure at the beauty of the young couple.

“But now,” said the prince, after he had been introduced to Callias, “I must see your grandmother at once. The wedding must take place to-day instead of in four days. Every hour’s delay may prove a source of danger. Is Theopompus here?”

“I think so,” answered Sappho, “else I do not know why grandmother stays so long in the house. But what do you mean about the wedding? I thought—”

“Let us go in first, dearest, I think a storm is approaching. The sky grows dark, and the air is becoming unbearably sultry.”

“Come quickly, then,” cried Sappho, “if you do not wish me to die of curiosity. You need not fear the storm. Since my childhood it has never thundered or lightened in Egypt at this time of year.”²

“Then you will have a new experience to-day,” said Callias, laughing; “a heavy drop of rain fell on my bald head just now. The Nile swallows flew low over the waters when I came, and a black cloud is spreading over the moon.

¹ The second of the two odes of Sappho which have been preserved in a complete form. Translated by J. Barwick Hodge, Esq.

² Storms are very rare in Egypt, but they occasionally take place, as we ourselves actually experienced in January, 1870. Herod. iii. 10, narrates as a very remarkable fact that it rained in Upper Egypt at the time of our story.

Come in quickly so that you do not get wet. Slave, see that a black lamb¹ is sacrificed to the gods of the Nether World."

Theopompus was in Rhodopis' sitting-room, as Sappho had conjectured. He had just finished his account of Zopyrus' arrest and the expedition of Bartja and his friends. They were all the more pleased at the prince's unexpected arrival, because of the anxiety caused by recent events. He gave a rapid account of what had taken place during the last few hours, and Theopompus offered to provide a quick ship for him and his friends.

"That is capital," cried Callias. "My own trireme, which brought me to Naucratis to-day, is in the harbour, perfectly ready, and at your service. I need only order the helmsman to keep the crew together and have everything in readiness. You owe me no thanks. I must rather thank you for the honour you confer on me. Here, Cnacias, hurry to my slave, Philomelus, who is waiting in the ante-chamber. Bid him row to the harbour and order Nausarchus, my helmsman, to have everything ready for departure. Take him this seal, which will give him full authority."

"And my slaves?" asked Bartja.

"Cnacias shall order my old steward to take them to Callias' ship," answered Theopompus.

"When they see this token they will obey at once," added Bartja, handing his ring to the old servant.

When Cnacias had retired with a low bow, the prince continued: "But now, my mother, I have an urgent request to make."

"I guess what it is," said Rhodopis, smiling. "You wish to hasten the wedding, and I see that I must yield to your desire."

"If I am not mistaken," cried Callias, "a rare case is presented; two people thoroughly rejoice at the danger which threatens them."

"Perhaps you are right," answered Bartja, secretly pressing his love's hand. Then he turned to Rhodopis and begged her to give him, at once, her dearest treasure, whose worth he well knew.

¹ The Greeks were accustomed to sacrifice a black lamb to approaching storms, which belonged to the gods of the Nether World.

Rhodopis raised herself to her full height, laid her right hand on Sappho's head, her left on Bartja's, and said :

"Children, there is a legend that in the land of roses a blue lake now ebbs gently, now rises in storms, and that the water of this lake tastes sweet as honey, bitter as gall. You will learn to know the meaning of this legend, and in the hoped-for land of matrimony pass through hours calm and stormy, bitter and sweet. While you were a child, Sappho, your days passed unclouded, like a spring morn. As soon as you became a loving maiden, your heart was opened to pain which has become a well-known guest there, during these long months of parting, a guest who will appear as long as you live. Bartja, it will be your duty to keep this importunate guest from Sappho as far as it lies in your power. I know mankind, and before Cræssus assured me of your noble character, I knew you were worthy of Sappho. Therefore I allowed you to eat the quince with her, therefore I unhesitatingly give up to you the being whom till now I kept as a sacred pledge entrusted to me. Look on your wife in this light, as a treasure lent to you, for nothing is more dangerous for love than the sure confidence of exclusive possession. I have been blamed because I allow this inexperienced child to go forth to your distant home, where the conditions are so unfavourable to women. But I know love, and I know that a loving girl has no other home than the heart of the man to whom she gives herself, that a woman, wounded by Eros, heeds no misfortune but that of living apart from the man of her choice. Besides, Callias and Theopompus, I appeal to you, are your wives much better off than the Persian women? Does the Ionian or Attic woman not spend her life in the women's apartments, like the Persian; is she not glad, if, as an exceptional favour, she is allowed to cross the street, deeply veiled, and accompanied by watchful slaves? As to the polygamy of the Persians, I fear neither for Sappho nor for Bartja. He will be more faithful to his wife than a Greek, for in Sappho he will find combined what you Greeks, Callias, seek partly in the cultivated hetæraë, partly in marriage. In the one housewives and mothers, in the others intelligent and animating companions. Take her, my son, I give you Sappho,

gladly and trustfully, as an old warrior joyfully gives his strong son the best of his possessions, his weapons. Though she is going far away she will still remain a Greek, and, what is a great consolation to me, she will bring honour to the name of Greek in her new home, and win new friends for Greece. I thank you for your tears, my child, I can control mine, but I have paid Fate a heavy price for this power.. The gods hear your oath, noble Bartja. Never forget it, and accept her as your property, your friend, your wife. Take her away as soon as your companions return. The gods do not wish that the epithalamium should be sung at Sappho's wedding."

With these words Rhodopis joined their hands, embraced Sappho affectionately, and breathed a soft kiss on the young Persian's brow. Then she turned to her Greek friends, who were deeply moved, and said :

"That was a silent wedding, without song or torchlight. May the union be all the happier. Melitta, go and fetch the wedding jewels of the bride, the bracelets and chains, which lie in the bronze casket on my dressing-table, so that our darling may give her hand to her husband as befits a future princess."¹

"Hasten," cried Callias, whose cheerfulness had returned. But the niece of the greatest singer of epithalamia must not enter her nuptial chamber without music. As the house of the young husband is too far away, we will suppose that the empty andronitis is his dwelling. We will lead the maiden through the middle door, and enjoy a pleasant meal by the hearth of the house. Hither, slaves, form two choruses. You must enact the youths, you others the maidens. Sing Sappho's epithalamium, 'As in the Mountains.' I will be the torch-bearer. This office is mine by right. You must know, Bartja, that my family has the hereditary right of bearing the torches at the Eleusyan mysteries, hence we are called Daduchs, or torch-bearers. Slave, place wreaths on the door of the andronitis, and order your fellows to pelt us with sweets when we enter. Why, Melitta, how were you able to procure those

¹ A Greek bride appeared in costly jewels, and was anointed with perfumes after the bath which both bride and bridegroom were obliged to take.

beautiful bridal wreaths of violets and myrtle so quickly? The rain is pouring through the opening in the roof. Look, Hymen has persuaded Zeus to help you to keep the old marriage customs. As you cannot have the bath which bride and bridegroom are wont to take on the morning of the wedding, according to ancient custom, you must come here for a minute and let this moisture sent by Zeus represent holy spring water. Now begin your song, maidens. Let the maid lament the loss of the time of roses, and the youths praise the fate of the newly-married."

Five high, well-trained voices began plaintively to sing the chorus of maidens :—

"As in the mountains the shepherds oft trample under their footsteps
The hyacinth, so that the purple blossom is broken and falleth
Unto the earth, where unheeded it lies in the dust till it fadeth,
So is the maiden, who yielding of her chastity the fair flower,
Is scorned by all the youths and avoided by all the maidens.

Hymen, O Hymenæus, O Hymen, come Hymenæus."

The other deeper chorus answered the girls joyously :—

"As on the desolate meadow the vine which in solitude mourneth,
Wedded unto the elms rises upwards, and fruits and tendrils
Are twined round the lofty treetop, the greatest joy of the peasant,
So is the woman who wedded, in the midst of her joy and her beauty,
Is loved by her lord, and fills with pleasure the hearts of her parents.

Hymen, O Hymenæus, O Hymen, come Hymenæus."¹

Now both choruses joined and repeated the longing and yet joyful, "Hymen, O Hymenæus, come." Suddenly the song ceased, for a flash of lightning which was followed by a clap of thunder, darted through the opening in the roof under which Callias had placed the newly-married pair. "You see," cried the Daduch, "Zeus himself lights the wedding torch, and sings the epithalamium for his favourites."

When the morning dawned Bartja and Sappho left the bridal chamber, and entered the garden, which appeared bright and fresh as the faces of the young couple, after the storm, which had raged all night with unusual violence.

¹ The first two verses alone are still extant as Sappho wrote them. Catullus' imitation, judging from the existing verses, we might almost say translation, had to be used for the rest.

Both had risen early from their couch, because Bartja's anxiety for his friends, forgotten in his joy, had awakened with increased strength.

The garden lay on an artificial hill, that rose above the flooded plain, which could be overlooked from there. Blue and white lotus flowers floated on the surface of the Nile, near the shore, and in the shallows appeared great swarms of water-fowl. The silver herons on the shore, looked like snow on the mountain tops. Solitary broad-winged eagles circled in the pure morning air. Doves swayed to and fro on the tops of the palms. The pelicans and ducks flew up screaming and chattering whenever the gay sail of a boat appeared. A fresh north-east wind blew through the air, which the storm had cooled, and, though it was early, drove a number of boats over the flooded fields. The songs of the sailors mingled with the splashing of the oars and the twittering of the birds, helped to enliven the landscape of the flooded Nile, bright in spite of its monotony.

The young pair stood close together by the low wall which surrounded the garden of Rhodopis, whispering loving words, as they looked on the scene, till Bartja's keen eye discovered a boat, which strong oarsmen, aided by the wind, were directing straight towards Rhodopis' house.

A few minutes later the boat reached the wall, and soon afterwards Zopyrus and his preservers appeared before the prince. Darius' plan had succeeded, thanks to the storm, which had alarmed the Egyptians, by its violence, and the unusual time of its occurrence, but no time was to be lost, for it was to be expected that the inhabitants of Sais would use every effort to capture the fugitives.

After a brief but very tender farewell, Sappho parted from her grandmother, and accompanied by old Melitta, who followed her to Persia, entered Syloson's boat with Bartja's help; an hour later they reached the beautiful Hygieia the swift ocean ship of Callias.

The Athenian awaited the fugitives on board the trireme, and took a particularly affectionate leave of Sappho and Bartja. The latter placed a costly chain round his neck as a token of his gratitude, while Syloson put his scarlet

cloak on Darius' shoulders in memory of their common danger. It was a masterpiece of the Sidonian dyers which had aroused the admiration of the son of Hystaspes. Darius joyfully accepted the gift, and cried to Polycrates' brother on leaving :

"My Greek friend, remember always that I owe you much gratitude, and give me a chance of repaying you as soon as possible."

"But first you must come to me," cried the liberated prisoner, embracing his preserver. "I am ready to share my last coin with you, and more than that, to spend a whole week for your sake in the accursed hole from which you freed me. The anchor is weighed. Farewell, my good Greek. Greet the flower-sisters from me, especially little Stephanion, and tell her she owes it to me that her tiresome, long-legged lover will not annoy her again for some time. Take this purse of money and give it to the wife and children of the interfering Egyptian whom I treated so badly in the heat of the fight."

During these words the anchors fell clattering on the deck, the wind swelled the hoisted sails, and the monotonous - Celeusma was heard from the trireme, the trieraulos marking the time on his flute. The prow of the boat, with its wooden image of Hygieia, began to move. Bartja and Sappho stood by the helm, and looked long towards Naucratis, till the shores of the Nile disappeared from sight, and the blue waves of the Hellenic sea splashed against the sides of the trireme.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BATTLE.

AT Ephesus the young couple heard the news of Amasis' death. Thence they proceeded first to Babylon and then to Pasargada, in the province of Persia. Cassandane, Atossa, and Croesus were there. The former had felt a longing to visit the monument which had recently been erected to her husband, according to Croesus' plans, before the expedition to Egypt, which she was to accompany. The queen, who had regained her eyesight by Nebenchari's skill, was delighted with the magnificent monument, and spent hours daily in the beautiful gardens which surrounded it.

Cyrus' tomb consisted of a gigantic sarcophagus of marble, which, like a house, rested on a foundation of six high marble steps. The interior was furnished like a room, and besides the golden coffin, on which rested the remains of Cyrus, spared by the dogs, the vultures, and the elements, it contained a silver bed and a table of the same metal, on which were placed golden cups, many garments and splendid jewels.

The building was about forty feet high. It was surrounded by shady paradises¹ and colonnades, which owed their origin to Croesus, and in the midst of the grove was a house for the magi, who had charge of the tomb. Cyrus' palace which, according to his decree, the future kings of Persia were to inhabit for at least a few months in every year, was visible in the distance. This splendid building, which resembled a fortress, and was almost inaccessible, contained the treasures of the kingdom.

¹ Persian pleasure gardens.

Cassandane felt at her ease in the fresh mountain air, which blew round the tomb of her beloved husband. She saw with pleasure that in this calm place Atossa recovered her former cheerfulness, which had left her since Nitetis' death and Darius' departure. Sappho soon became intimate with her new mother and sister, and like them, left beautiful Pasargada with reluctance.

Darius and Zopyrus had remained with the great army which was assembling in the plains of the Euphrates, and Bartja was also obliged to return to Babylon before its departure.

Cambyzes came to meet his family, and spoke with admiration of the beauty of his new sister-in-law, while Sappho, as she confessed to her husband, could not look at her brother-in-law without fear.

The king had changed greatly in a few months. His pale features, which were naturally well formed, had become ugly and flushed by immoderate drinking. His dark eyes had, it is true, retained their old fire, but they burned with an impure flame. His hair, formerly raven black, hung wild and grey from head and chin, and the proud, triumphant smile, which once gave beauty to his face, had given way to an expression of contemptuous disgust and harsh severity. He only laughed when intoxicated, a condition that had long ceased to be anything unusual, but it was a wild horse-laugh.

He still showed aversion to his wives, and left his harem in Susa, even when he started for Egypt, while his nobles took their favourite wives and concubines with them. In spite of this, no one could accuse him of injustice. He was, if anything, more particular that justice should be carried out, and if he discovered that it had been abused, he was inexorable, and pronounced cruel punishments. When, for instance, he heard that a judge, Sisamnes, had pronounced an unjust sentence in return for a bribe, he had the unhappy man flayed, and the judgment seat covered with his skin; then he appointed the son of the man he had punished to be his successor, and forced him to sit in this horrible chair. He also showed himself indefatigable as a general, and superintended the drill of the troops assembled at Babylon with severity and skill.

After the new year's feast, the army was to march. Cambyases celebrated the feast sumptuously at an enormous expense, and at the end of the festivities joined the army, where he met his brother, who, radiant with joy, kissed his garment, and told him triumphantly that he hoped soon to be a father. The king trembled at the news, returned no answer to Bartja, became perfectly intoxicated that night, and the next morning summoned the mobeds, magi, and Chaldæans, in order to ask them a question.

"You know," he began, "that when you interpreted my dream, you asserted that Atossa would be the mother of the future king of this realm. Shall I sin against the gods if I wed my sister, and bring about what my dream promised?"

The magi consulted for a short time, then Oropastes, the chief priest, prostrated himself before the king and said: "We do not believe that you would sin through this marriage, for in the first place it is the custom of the Persians to wed their relations,¹ and secondly, though the law does not say that a pure man may wed his sister, it says that the king may do as he pleases. Act as you wish, and you will always do right."²

Cambyases dismissed the magi with rich gifts, invested Oropastes with full authority as governor, and later on announced to his horrified mother that as soon as he had conquered the Egyptians and punished Amasis' son, he intended to marry his sister Atossa.

At last the army, which consisted of more than eight hundred thousand warriors, left in separate detachments, and after two months reached the Syrian desert, where it was joined by the Arab tribes, the Amalekites, and the Geshurites, who had been won over by Phanes, and who supplied the troops with water, which they had brought on horses and camels.

Near Akko, in the land of the Canaanites, the fleets of the Syrians, Phœnicians, and the Ionians, who were subjects

¹ According to Anquetil, modern Persians esteem a marriage among near relations very highly.

² Herod. iii. 31.

of the Persian realm, assembled together with the auxiliary troops from Cyprus and Samos won by Phanes. There was a peculiar circumstance connected with the latter. Polycrates looked on Cambyses' invitation to send troops as a favourable opportunity of ridding himself at one blow of all those citizens who were discontented with his absolute rule. He therefore manned ten triremes with eight thousand dissatisfied Samians, and sent them to the Persians with the request that none of them might be allowed to return.

As soon as Phanes learned this, he warned the Samians who, instead of fighting against Egypt, returned to Samos, and tried to overthrow Polycrates. He defeated them, however, in a battle, and they went to Sparta to seek help against the tyrant.

A whole month before the time of the floods, the Persian army faced the Egyptians at Pelusium, on the north-west of the Delta. All Phanes' preparations had turned out well. The journey of an army through the desert, which was wont to cost thousands of lives, had been effected with little loss, thanks to the Arabs, who had fulfilled their promise faithfully, and the time of year, which was happily chosen, allowed the Persian soldiers to enter Egypt on dry land and without delay.

The king received his Greek friend with great distinction, and nodded pleasantly, when the latter cried: "I hear you are less gay than before the death of your fair friend. It is well for a man to cling to his grief; a woman gives vent to her sorrow in violent but brief laments. I feel with you, for I, too, have lost what I loved best. Let us thank the gods together, that they have granted us war and vengeance—the best remedies for sorrow."

Then Phanes accompanied the ruler to the army and to the feast. It was wonderful how he influenced the fierce man; how temperate, even cheerful, Cambyses became as soon as the Athenian entered his presence.

The Persian army was, indeed, enormous; but the number of the Egyptian troops was by no means contemptible. Their camp extended along the walls of Pelusium, the frontier fortress which since ancient times was destined to preserve Egypt from the attacks of the nations

of the east. Deserters assured the Persians that the entire army of the Pharaoh consisted of nearly six hundred thousand men.

Besides a large number of chariot soldiers, thirty thousand Carian and Ionian mercenaries, and the gendarme corps of the Mazaïu,¹ two hundred and fifty thousand Calasiries, one hundred and sixty thousand Hermotybies, twenty thousand horsemen, and more than fifty thousand auxiliary troops, among whom the Libyan Masdavasha² were especially distinguished for their ancient martial fame, the Ethiopians by their great number assembled under Psamtik's banner.

The infantry was divided into regiments and companies which assembled round different standards. Each division was distinguished by different arms. Here stood heavily armed men, with large shields, lances, and daggers; warriors armed with axe and sword, with small shields and light clubs, and men with slings. The chief part of the army consisted of archers, whose unstrung bows were almost as high as a man. The riders wore only loin cloths, and had light clubs, while chariot soldiers who belonged to the noblest of the caste of warriors went to the battle in rich dress, and spent large sums on the trappings of their splendid far-famed horses, and on their magnificent four-wheeled chariots. Beside them stood the charioteer, while they themselves, eager for the fray, were accustomed to fight with bow and lance.

The infantry of the Persians did not exceed that of the Egyptians in number; but the Asiatic cavalry was six times as numerous as that of the inhabitants of the Nile valley.

As soon as the two armies faced each other, Cambyzes gave orders that the wide Pelusian plain should be cleared of the bushes, trees, and sandhills that appeared here and there, in order to allow his cavalry and scythe-chariots free play. Phanes assisted him with his accurate knowledge of the locality, and managed so well that his battle-plan, which was drawn up with great strategic insight,

¹ A corps consisting partly of foreigners, whose duty it was to guard prisoners of war.

² Probably the North African Maxyes mentioned by Herodotus.

was adopted, not only by Cambyzes, but also by the old general, Megabyzus, and the most experienced Achæmenidæ. His knowledge of the locality was particularly valuable, on account of the marshes which crossed the Pelusian plain, and which would have to be avoided if the battle was to end favourably for the Persians.

When the council of war was ended, Phanes again asked leave to speak, and said: "Now at last I may satisfy your curiosity with regard to the closed waggons full of animals which I had brought hither. They contain five thousand cats. You laugh; but I can assure you these animals will be more useful to us than a hundred thousand swordsmen. Many of you know the superstition of the Egyptians, which makes them prefer death to killing a cat. I myself nearly lost my life because I killed some of these animals. I remembered this superstition, and collected all the cats I could obtain wherever I came—in Cyprus, where there are splendid cats; in Samos, Crete, and Syria. I would suggest that they should be distributed among those troops which are opposed to Egyptians, and the men be ordered to fasten the sacred animals to their shields, and to hold them towards their assailants. I wager that every true Egyptian would rather leave the field than shoot at one of these revered animals."

Loud laughter greeted this proposal, which was agreed to after some deliberation, and orders were given that it should be carried out at once.

Cambyzes offered the ingenious Greek his hand to kiss, rewarded his plan with a magnificent gift, and urged him to wed a noble Persian. Then he invited him to supper, but Phanes excused himself, as he was obliged to review the Ionian troops, whom he scarcely knew, and whom he was to lead, and went to his tent.

At the entrance he found his slaves disputing with a bearded, ragged, dirty old man, who insisted on speaking with him. Phanes thought he was a beggar, and threw him a gold coin; but the old man did not even stoop to pick it up, but seized the Athenian's cloak, and cried: "I am Aristomachus of Sparta!"

Phanes now recognized his friend, who was woefully altered, led him into his tent, where his feet were washed,

and his head was anointed; gave him wine and food to strengthen him; removed his rags, and put a new chiton round his thin, muscular shoulders.

Aristomachus submitted in silence. When the food and wine had restored his strength, he answered the questions of the eager Athenian, and told him his story:

When Psantik murdered the little son of Phanes, Aristomachus declared that he would induce his subordinates to leave Amasis' service unless his friend's daughter were at once set at liberty, and a satisfactory explanation given of the death of the boy. The crown prince promised to consider the matter. When, two days later, the Spartan went at night on the Nile to Memphis, he was seized by Ethiopian warriors, bound, and flung into the dark hold of a ship, which, after a journey of many days and nights, anchored on a coast unknown to him. Here the prisoner was taken from his dungeon, and led in an easterly direction through a desert in the glowing heat, past strangely shaped rocks. At last he reached a mountain, at the foot of which were built innumerable huts, inhabited by a number of men, who, with chains on their hands and feet, were driven every morning into the pit of a mine, to hew gold out of the hard rock.¹ Many of these unhappy miners had lived for more than forty years in this place of misery; but most of them soon fell victims to the great exertions demanded of them, and to the terrible heat to which they were exposed as soon as they left the pit.

"My companions," said Aristomachus, "were mostly murderers, who had been condemned to death and reprieved, traitors deprived of their tongues, men who, like myself, were dangerous to the king. For three months I worked with this rabble, beaten by overseers, languishing in the heat of the sun, freezing when the cold dew of night fell on my naked limbs, chosen for death, and only living and prolonging life with the hope of avenging myself on

¹ Diodor. iii. 12, gives a full account of the forced labour at these mines. The mines were situated in the latitude of Coptas, near the Red Sea. Traces of them have recently been found. A map of these mines in a peculiar projection is preserved in a papyrus in the Turin Museum, reproduced by Chabas, "*Les Inscriptions des mines d'or.*"

my persecutors. The gods willed that our guardians took too much wine at the feast of Pacht, as is the custom of the Egyptians, so that they slept heavily, and did not notice that I and a young Jew, who was accused of having used false weights, and was therefore deprived of his right hand, seized the opportunity for flight. Zeus Lacedæmon, and the great God of the youth, assisted us and baffled our pursuers, whose voices we often heard close behind us. I procured food with the bow which I had taken from one of our guards. Where there was no game we ate roots, fruit, and birds' eggs. The position of the sun and stars helped us to find the right way. We knew that the Red Sea flowed near the mines, and that we were south of Memphis and Thebes. We soon reached the coast, and went towards the north with unwearied steps, till we met some kindhearted sailors, who took care of us till an Arab boat took us up and brought me and the Jew, who knew the language of the sailors, to Ezeongeber, in the land of the Edomites. There we heard that Cambyzes was going to Egypt with a large army. We travelled to Harma with a troop of Amalekite horsemen, who were to bring water to the Persians. Thence I wandered to Pelusium with stragglers of the great Asiatic army, who now and then took compassion on me and put me on their horses. I heard that you were the chief general of the king. I have kept my oath and been faithful to the Greeks in Egypt. Now it is your turn to help old Aristomachus, and procure for him the sole thing which he longs for—revenge on his persecutors."

"You shall have it," cried the Athenian, and pressed the old man's hand. "I will place you at the head of the heavy Milesian troops, and allow you to rage against our foes as you please. But that does not cancel my debt by any means, and I thank the gods that I can make you happy. Know that a few days after your disappearance a Spartan ship of honour came to Naucratis, commanded by your gallant son, in order to bring you, the father of two Olympic victors, back to your home, by command of the Ephors."

At these words the old man trembled, his eyes filled with tears, his lips murmured a prayer. Then he struck his brow, and cried with trembling voice: "Now it will become

true. Pardon me, Phœbus Apollo, if I doubted the words of your priestess. What said the oracle?

“When from the snow-clad heights descend the men in their armour
Down to the shores of the winding stream which waters the valley,
Then the delaying boat shall conduct you unto the meadows,
Where the peace of home is to the wanderer given.
When from the snow-clad heights descend the men in their armour,
Then what the judging five have long refused shall be granted.”

Now the promise of the god will be fulfilled. Now I may return. But first I raise my hand and ask Dice not to deny me the joy of revenge.”

“To-morrow the day of requital will dawn,” cried Phanes, joining in the old man’s prayer. “To-morrow I will slay the sacrifices for my dead son, and will not rest till Cambyzes has pierced the heart of Egypt with the arrow which I pointed. Come now, my friend, and let me lead you to the king. One man like you is worth more than a whole army of Egyptians.”

The night had come, and as the unfortified camp of the Persians made them fear that the enemy might attack them, the soldiers stood drawn up at their posts. The infantry leaned on their shields and spears, while the cavalry kept their horses saddled and bridled by the bivouac fires. Cambyzes rode along the lines, inspiring the warriors by his presence and greeting. The centre of the army was not yet drawn up, for it consisted of the Persian body-guard, the apple bearers, the Immortals, and the relations of the king, who were accustomed to accompany their ruler against his foes. The Greeks of Asia Minor had gone to rest, by Phanes’ command, instead of being drawn up in battle array. The Athenian wished that his men should be fresh, and allowed them to sleep peacefully, though fully armed, while he watched for them. Aristomachus, who had been joyfully received by the Ionians, and kindly greeted by the king, was to fight with half the Greeks on the left wing, while Phanes stood with the remainder on the right of the guards. The king intended to lead the battle at the head of the ten thousand Immortals, before whom waved the blue, red, and gold standard, and the flag of

Kave.¹ Bartja was to lead the Persian guards (a thousand men), and the mail-clad cavalry.

Croesus commanded a division of the army which guarded the camp, the great treasures it contained, the wives of the nobles, and the mother and sister of the king. When shining Mithra appeared and the dark spirits of night hid in their caves, the sacred fire which had been carried in front of the army from Babylon was fanned to a mighty flame, and fed by the king and the magi with precious incense. Then Cambyses sacrificed and held the golden vessel on high, praying for victory and fame. He gave the Persians their battle cry: "Auramazda, helper and guide," and placed himself at the head of his guards, whose tiaras were adorned with wreaths. The Greeks also sacrificed and shouted with joy when the priests announced that the omens promised victory. Their battle cry was "Hebe." Meanwhile the Egyptian priests also began the day with sacrifice and prayer, and then ranged themselves in order of battle. Psamtik, the king, was in front of the centre on a golden chariot with a bow-case of the same material. His horses were decked with purple cloths and gold trappings, and had ostrich feathers on their proud heads. His charioteer belonged to one of the noblest Egyptian families, and stood, with whip and rein, on the left of his master, who wore the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt.

On the left of the centre the Greek and Carian mercenaries were to fight. The cavalry stood at the extreme end of both wings, while the Egyptian and Ethiopian infantry were drawn up, six deep, on the right and left of the chariot warriors and Greeks.

Psamtik drove through the ranks, encouraging and greeting all, and at last stopped in front of the Greeks, and addressed them as follows: "I am glad, heroes, with whose deeds in Cyprus and Libya I am acquainted, that this time I can share your fame, and place new wreaths of victory on your brows. Do not fear that if we conquer I shall diminish

¹ This flag consisted, according to Ferdusi, of the leather apron of the bold smith of the Persian legend, who summoned men to revolt against Zohak, and helped Feridun to overthrow the cruel desolater of the realm.

your privileges. Calumniators have warned you to prepare for such ingratitude on my part, but I assure you, that if we conquer, I will favour you and your descendants in every way, and call you the supporters of my throne. Consider, too, that to-day you are not fighting for me alone, but also for the freedom of your distant home. For it is easy to see that if Cambyzes becomes master of Egypt he will not be content, but will stretch out his covetous hand towards beautiful Greece and its islands. I need only remind you that they lie between Egypt and your Asiatic brethren, who already sigh in captivity under the Persian yoke. Your shouts show me that you agree. I must, however, entreat you to listen to me for a minute longer, for it is my duty to tell you the name of the man who for huge sums has sold, not only Egypt, but also his own home, to the great king of Persia. Phanes is the man. You must not murmur, for I swear that it is this very Phanes who has accepted Cambyzes' gold, and promised him not only to open the way to Egypt for him, but also the gates of your native land. This man knew the country and the people, and can be bought with gold to do anything. Do you see him yonder, walking by the king and prostrating himself in the dust at his feet? Is that a Greek? It seems to me that I once heard that Greeks knelt only to their gods. But of course, he who sells his native land ceases to be its citizen. You agree with me? You think I am right? You disdain to call that dishonoured man your countryman? Well then, I will give you the daughter of that miserable man, whom I kept as hostage, and whom he sold with his native land. Do with the rogue's child as you list. Deck her with roses, kneel to her, but never forget that she belongs to him who disgraces the name of Greek, and betrayed you and his country."

A cry of fury broke from the men who received the trembling child. A soldier lifted up the unhappy girl and showed her to her father, who recognized her distinctly, for he was only a bow-shot's length from the mercenaries. At the same time an Egyptian, who afterwards became famous through his loud voice, cried to the trembling father: "Behold, Athenian, how bribed traitors are punished here." Then a Carian seized a bowl, the contents of which had

been the gift of the king, and had intoxicated the man and his companions in arms, plunged his sword into the child's breast, caught her innocent blood in the brazen vessel, filled a cup with the horrible draught, and drank it as though pledging the father, who stood almost paralyzed. Like madmen the other mercenaries attacked the bowl, and quaffed the grape juice polluted with blood.

At that moment Psamtik triumphantly discharged the first arrow at the Persians. The mercenaries flung down the child's body, and intoxicated by the blood they had tasted, began their battle song, and rushed to the fight far ahead of their Egyptian companions.

The Persian lines began to advance; Phanes, mad with grief and rage, and followed by his heavily-armed men, who were horrified at the barbarous cruelty of their countrymen, rushed towards the men whose affection he thought he had gained by ten years' faithful work as their leader.

When the sun stood in its zenith, the luck seemed to have turned in favour of the Egyptians, but when it began to set, the Persians were gaining, and when the full moon shone in the heavens, the Egyptians fled wildly from the field, and either perished in the Pelusian swamps and the branches of the Nile, which flowed through them, or fell before the swords of Asiatics, fighting for the freedom of their home.

Twenty thousand Persians, and fifty thousand Egyptians covered the bloodstained sand of the coast with their bodies, while the number of those who were wounded, drowned, and captured could scarcely be counted. Psamtik had been the last of the fugitives, and slightly wounded, reached the opposite shore of the Nile in safety on a noble steed, and hurried to Memphis, the strongly fortified town of the Pyramids, with a few thousand of his faithful troops.

But few of the Greek mercenaries in the Egyptian service survived. Phanes, thirsting for revenge, had fought so terribly among them with his Ionians. Ten thousand Carians were taken prisoners. Phanes himself killed the murderer of his child.

Aristomachus, too, had done wonders in spite of his

wooden leg. But neither he, nor his companion in revenge, had succeeded in capturing Psamtik.

When the battle was over, and the Persians returned to the camp with shouts of joy, they were received by Croesus, the remaining priests and soldiers, and celebrated the glorious victory with sacrifices and prayers.

On the following morning the king summoned the leaders, and distributed rewards among them according to their merit, such as rich garments, gold chains and rings, swords, and stars of precious stones; gold and silver coins were flung among the soldiers.

The chief assault of the Egyptians had been directed against the centre of the Persians, at the head of which the king fought, and the guards already began to waver, when Bartja with his horsemen came up at the right moment, encouraged the men anew, and fighting like a lion, decided the issue of the day by his courage and activity. The Persians greeted the youth with joy, and called him the victor of Pelusium, the best of the Achæmenidæ.

The king heard these shouts, and was filled with deep anger. He was conscious that he had fought at the risk of his life, with true heroism, and with the strength of a giant, and yet the fight would have been lost, if that boy had not given him the victory. His brother, who had clouded his love, now deprived him of half his martial fame. He felt that he hated Bartja, and his fists clenched when he saw the young hero, radiant with noble consciousness of his powers.

Phanes was in his tent wounded, beside him rested Aristomachus, who was dying.

"The oracle lied after all," murmured the Spartan; "I am dying, and shall never see my home again."

"It spoke the truth," returned Phanes. "What were the last words of the Pythia?"

'Then the delaying boat shall conduct you unto the meadows,
Where the peace of home is to the wanderer given.'

Can you misunderstand the meaning of these words? They mean the delaying boat of Charon, which will carry you to your last home, the great resting-place of all wanderers, the realm of Hades."

"Yes, my friend, you are right. I am going to Hades."

"The 'judging five,' the ephors, granted you before you died, what they had long denied, your return to Lacædemon. You must thank the gods who gave you such sons, and vengeance on your foes. When I recover I will go to Greece, and tell your son what a glorious death his father died, how he was carried on his shield from the field to his grave."

"Do so, and give him my shield, to preserve in memory of his father. I need not bid him be virtuous."

"When we capture Psamtik, shall I tell him what you did to help his fall?"

"No; he saw me before he fled, and dropped his bow with horror at the unexpected sight. His friends thought it was the signal for flight, and turned their horses' heads."

"The gods destroy the criminal through his own shameful deeds. Psamtik lost courage when he thought that even the spirits from the Nether World fought against him."

"He had enough to do with mortals. The Persians fought well. But without the guards and us, the battle would have been lost."

"Certainly."

"Zeus Lacædemon, I thank thee."

"You are praying?"

"I am thanking the gods, for they let me die without fear for my native land. These heterogeneous masses are not dangerous to our Greek home. Physician, when shall I die?"

The Milesian physician who had accompanied the men of Asia Minor, who followed the Persian army, smiled sadly, and pointing to the arrow-head on the Spartan's breast, returned: "You can only live for a few hours longer. As soon as I remove the arrow from your wound, you will die."

The Spartan thanked the physician, bade Phanes farewell, sent his greetings to Rhodopis, and before he could be prevented, drew the arrow from his breast with a firm hand. A few minutes later Aristomachus was dead.

The same day a Persian embassy sailed to Memphis on

board a Lesbian vessel to invite the king to surrender with the town at discretion. Cambyses followed, after he had sent part of the army to Sais, under Megabyzus, in order to take the town.

At Heliopolis he was met by embassies from the Greek inhabitants of Naucratis and from the Libyans, who asked for protection and peace, and offered him a golden wreath and costly gifts. He received them graciously, and promised them his friendship, but he dismissed the embassies from Cyrene and Barca angrily, and with his own hands distributed among the soldiers their tribute, five hundred silver minæ,¹ which seemed ridiculously small to him.

At the same place he heard that on the arrival of his embassy, the inhabitants of Memphis had poured out of the town in crowds; had torn limb from limb all who were on board the ship, and dragged them into the citadel. Cambyses exclaimed in anger when he heard the news:

"I swear by Mithra that for every one of the men they have murdered ten inhabitants of Memphis shall die."

Two days later he halted before the gates of the great town with his army. The siege lasted for a short time only, for the garrison was far too weak for the size of the place, and the terrible defeat of Pelusium had discouraged the inhabitants.

King Psamtik went with his chief officers to meet the king. The unhappy man appeared in rent garments, and with every sign of mourning. Cambyses received him in cold silence, and ordered that he and his retinue should be arrested and led away. Ladice, Amasis' widow, who also appeared before the king, was treated with respect, and at the intercession of Phanes, to whom she had always behaved graciously, she was sent under safe escort to her home, Cyrene, where she lived till the fall of her nephew, Arcesilaus, and the flight of her sister Pheretime. Then she went to Anthylla, the Egyptian town which belonged to her, where, after a quiet lonely life, she died at an advanced age.

Cambyses was too proud to avenge himself on a woman for the deceit practised on him, and as a Persian he had far too much respect for a mother, especially the mother

¹ About, £2500.

of a king, to injure Amasis' widow. Psamtik remained in the palace, and was treated as a king, though he was closely guarded, while Cambyzes besieged and took the capital, Sais.

Neithotep, the priest of Neith, had acted as leader to the distinguished Egyptians, who incited the people to resist, and he was sent to Memphis with a hundred of his companions in misfortune, where he was kept a close prisoner. Most of the officers of the Pharaoh voluntarily did homage to Cambyzes at Sais. They called him "Ramestu," that is, Child of the Sun; induced him to be formally crowned as king of Upper and Lower Egypt, and, in accordance with an ancient custom to be admitted into the caste of priests. Cambyzes submitted, on the advice of Phanes and Cræsus, though somewhat unwillingly. He even sacrificed in the temple of Neith, and allowed the new chief priest of the goddess to give him a general idea of the mysteries. He summoned a few of the old courtiers to his presence, and promoted many of the officials to high posts. The admiral of Amasis' Nile fleet even managed to gain his favour, and was admitted as companion of his table. When Cambyzes left the town at last, he appointed Megabyzus governor.

The king had no sooner left Sais than the common people gave vent to their suppressed rage, assassinated the Persian sentries, poisoned the wells, and set fire to the stables of the cavalry. Megabyzus went to the king after these events, and represented to him that so much hostility might easily turn to open rebellion unless it were kept down by fear. "Let the two thousand noble youths of Memphis, whom you doomed to death in return for the murder of our embassy, be executed at once," he said. "It would do no harm if you included the son of Psamtik in the number of the condemned, for the insurgents will gather round him. I hear that the daughters of the former king, and of the chief priest Neithotep, are obliged to carry water for the bath of noble Phanes."

The Athenian smiled at these words and said: "Cambyzes, my master, allowed me, at my request, to be served in this noble fashion."

"But," added Cambyzes, "I have forbidden you to threaten the life of any member of the fallen royal house. Only a king may punish kings."

Phanes bowed. Cambyzes turned again to Megabyx¹⁸¹ and bade him have the condemned men executed next day, as a warning to all. He would decide later on as to the fate of the young prince, but at all events he was to be led to the place of execution with the others. "We must show," he said, "that we can meet hostility with severity."

When Croesus ventured to beg for mercy for the innocent boy, Cambyzes smiled and said: "Be tranquil, old friend. The child is still living, and perhaps he will not be worse off among us than your son who fought so well at Pelusium. But I should like to know whether Psamtik bears his fate with the manly composure you showed twenty-five years ago."

"We could find out," said Phanes. "Let the king enter the court, and let the prisoners and the condemned be led past him, then we shall see whether he is a man or a coward."

"Be it so," cried Cambyzes. "I will conceal myself and watch him unseen. Accompany me, Phanes, and tell me the names and the rank of the different prisoners."

On the following morning the Athenian went with the king to the balcony surrounding the great courtyard, which was planted with trees. Thick flowering shrubs hid the listeners, who could distinguish every movement of the people below them, and hear all they said. Psamtik stood leaning against a palm tree among some of his former companions, and looked down gloomily, while his daughter with Neithotep's child and other maidens in the dress of slaves, entered the court, bearing cans of water. As soon as the maidens saw the king they uttered a loud lament, which roused Psamtik from his reverie. When he recognized the mourning maidens he bent his eyes to the ground again, but soon raised his head, and asked his daughter for whom she carried water. When he heard that she was Phanes' slave he turned pale, nodded, and cried to the maidens: "Go!"

A few minutes later the prisoners entered the court with halters round their necks, and bridles in their mouths, led by Persian guards. Little Necho headed the procession, he stretched out his hands towards his father, and begged him to punish the wicked strangers who wished to kill

him. The Egyptians shed tears of sorrow at his words. Psamtik looked down again, with tearless eyes, and signed a last farewell to his weeping child.

Soon after, the prisoners from Sais entered. Among them was aged Neithotep. The former chief priest was in rags, and crept along painfully, supported by a staff. At the gate of the court he raised his eyes and recognized Darius, his former pupil. Careless of those around him, he went at once to the youth, told him his misery, asked him for assistance, and at last begged for alms.

Darius gave him alms, which induced the other Achæmenidæ who stood by to call to the old man, jestingly, and to throw him small coins, which he gratefully picked up, though with difficulty.

When Psamtik saw this he wept aloud, called his friend's name mournfully, and beat his brow.

Cambyes was surprised. He parted the bushes, went to the railing of the balcony, and called to the unhappy captive: "Tell me, strange man, why you did not lament and mourn at the sight of your unhappy daughter, and of your son who was led to death, and yet show so much sympathy for a beggar, who is not even related to you?"

Psamtik looked up at his conqueror, and answered: "The misfortune of my house, son of Cyrus, was too great for tears; but I may weep for the affliction of a friend who in his old age is transformed from a respected and happy man to a miserable beggar."

Cambyes nodded approvingly to the unhappy man; and when he looked round, he saw that he was not the only one whose eyes were filled with tears. Cræsus, Bartja, and all the Persians present, even Phanes, who had acted as interpreter to the two kings, wept aloud.

The proud victor was pleased to see these tears, and said, turning to the Athenian: "I think, my Greek friend, we have been avenged for the wrong done us. Rise, Psamtik, and seek to accustom yourself to your new fate, like this noble old man;" he pointed to Cræsus. "You and your house have been punished for your father's deceit. The crown that Amasis took from the daughter of Hophra, my wife, whom I shall never forget, I have torn from your brow. I began the war for Nitetis' sake. I give life to your son,

because she loved him. You shall henceforth live free from insults at my court, as companion of my table, and shall share the privileges of my nobles. Fetch the boy, Gyges. He shall be brought up as you were years ago, with the sons of the Achæmenidæe."

The Lydian hastened towards the door of the balcony to carry out his pleasant commission; but Phanes called him back before he could reach it, placed himself proudly between the king and Psamtik, who trembled with joy, and said: "Necho, son of Psamtik, is no more. In defiance of your command, my ruler, I used the authority which you once bestowed on me, and bade the executioner kill Amasis' grandson first of the prisoners. That horn which you heard was the signal of the death of the last heir to the crown of Egypt, born on the Nile. I know my fate, and do not ask for a life which has attained its goal. I understand your reproachful glances, Croesus. You grieve for the murdered child; but life is such a mixture of misery and disappointment, that I agree with Solon, and call him happy to whom the gods grant an early death, as they did to Ctesibis and Biton. Cambyzes, as a last favour, if ever you cared for me, if ever my advice helped you, allow me to speak yet a few words. Psamtik, you know what caused our quarrel. You others, whose esteem I value, shall hear it now. I was appointed leader of the troops sent against Cyprus in this man's place by his father. I attained great success where he had reaped humiliation. Without wishing it, I became acquainted with a secret which endangered his claim to the throne. Finally, I prevented him from carrying off a virtuous maiden from the house of her grandmother, a matron dear to all the Greeks. This is what he could not pardon; this induced him, when I was forced to leave his father's service, to challenge me to mortal combat. Now the fight is ended. You have murdered my innocent children, and pursued me as though I had been a dangerous animal. That was your revenge. I have robbed you of your throne, and made you and your people slaves. I have called your daughter my slave. I have caused the death of your son; and I have seen the maiden you persecuted become the happy wife of a hero. You, a conquered and fallen man, have seen me become the richest and wealthiest

of my people. Unhappy man, you have seen me weep with uncontrollable emotion at your dreadful fate, and that was my fairest revenge. I call him happy, as the blessed gods, who like me has survived for one minute the greatest misery of his enemy. Now I have nothing more to say."

Phanes was silent, and pressed his hand on his wound. Cambyzes looked at him with surprise, advanced a step, and was about to touch the belt of the Athenian—a movement which would have been equivalent to the signing of a death-warrant—when his eye fell on the chain which he had given him as a reward for the skill with which he had proved Nitetis' innocence. The memory of the woman he loved, and the gratitude he owed this remarkable man for innumerable services, softened his anger, and he dropped his hand which was raised to give the fatal signal. For a minute the stern ruler stood hesitating facing his disobedient friend; then he raised his hand with a sudden impulse, and pointed with an imperious gesture to the gate of the court.

Phanes bowed in silence, kissed the king's garment, and went calmly down into the court. Psamtik looked after him, trembling, sprang to the railing of the balcony, but before he could open his lips to curse, he fell down unconscious.

Cambyzes signed to his escort, and bade the chief hunter prepare for a lion hunt in the Libyan mountains.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN EXPEDITION ON THE NILE.

THE Nile had again begun to rise. Two months had passed since Phanes' flight, in which much had happened. Sappho had given birth to a daughter on the same day that Phanes left Egypt, and had recovered sufficiently, under her grandmother's care, to be able to take part in an expedition on the Nile, at the feast of Neith, which Cræsus had proposed. The young couple did not live at Memphis, for Bartja, in order to avoid Cambyzes, who had become unbearable since Phanes' flight, had gone with the king's permission to the palace of Sais.

Rhodopis, in whose house the Lydian and his son, Bartja, Darius, and Zopyrus were frequent guests, joined the party.

On the morning of the festival of Neith they entered a splendidly-decked boat eight miles below Memphis, and, driven by a favourable north wind, and impelled onwards by many oarsmen, they sailed up stream. The guests were protected from the hot rays of the sun by a wooden roof on the middle of the deck, which was partly gilt, partly painted.

Cræsus sat by Rhodopis; at her feet rested Theopompus, the Milesian. Sappho leaned against Bartja. Syloson, the brother of Polycrates, lay beside Darius, who gazed on the river, lost in thought, while Gyges and Zopyrus wound the flowers, which an Egyptian slave handed them, into wreaths for the two women.

"Who would think," said Bartja, "that we are going against the stream? The boat flies over the water like a swallow."

"That is owing to the strong north wind which cools our brows," said Theopompus. The Egyptian oarsmen certainly understand their work very well."

"And work twice as hard when they row against the current," added Cræsus. "We only exert our full strength when we meet resistance."

"And we raise difficulties for ourselves," said Rhodopis, "when fate has placed our boat in calm waters."

"That is so," cried Darius. "A noble man hates to swim comfortably with the stream. Men are all alike in idle repose. We need the fight to show that we are better than others."

"But noble warriors must beware of beginning quarrels," added Rhodopis. "Do you see the dark green water-melons which lie scattered about on the black land? If the sower had scattered the seeds too liberally, none of them would have ripened. Luxuriant vines and foliage would have choked the fruit and spoilt the harvest. War and work are man's destiny, but here, too, he must know how to use moderation, as in other things, if his efforts are to be crowned with success. Never to pass the right limits is the true art of the wise."

"I wish the king could hear you," cried Cræsus. "Instead of being content with his great conquest, his wishes rove afar. He would like to conquer the whole world, and since Phanes' exile, he lets the dews of intoxication throw him to the earth almost every day."

"Has his great mother no influence over him?" asked Rhodopis.

"She could not even keep him from his resolution of marrying Atossa, and was obliged to be present at the wedding banquet."

"Poor Atossa!" murmured Sappho.

"Her life as queen of Persia is not a happy one," continued Cræsus. "She must find it all the harder to live in peace with her brother and husband, because she herself is so passionate. Unfortunately, Cambyzes is said to neglect her very much, and to treat her like a child. But this marriage seems nothing unusual to the Egyptians, for with them it is not uncommon for brother and sister to become man and wife.¹

¹ Several monuments prove that it was no uncommon event for brothers to marry their sisters. The history of the Ptolemies furnishes many instances of such marriages.

"And in Persia," added Darius, feigning perfect composure, "marriages between blood relations are looked on as the best."

"To return to the king," said Cræsus, skilfully changing the conversation out of consideration for the son of Hystaspes; "I assure you that he may be called a noble man. The faults he commits in passionate fury are followed by repentance, and he has never forgotten his resolution to be a good and just ruler. The other day, for instance, at the banquet, before wine had dulled his senses, he asked what the Persians thought of him as compared with his father?"

"What was the answer?" asked Rhodopis.

"Intaphernes skilfully extricated us from the trap," laughed Zopyrus, "for he cried to the king: 'We think you deserve the preference, because you not only possess the lands of Cyrus without diminution, but by your conquest of Egypt you have extended our territory beyond the sea!' The king was not pleased with the answer, he struck the table with his fist and cried: 'Flatterers! vile flatterers!' Intaphernes was alarmed at this unexpected outburst, but the king turned to Cræsus and asked for his opinion. 'It seems to me,' said our clever friend, 'that you have not yet reached your father's height, for,' he added in a soothing tone, 'you have not yet such a son as the late king left behind in you.'"

"Good, good!" cried Rhodopis, smiling at her friend and clapping her hands. "These words would have done credit to cunning Odysseus. But how did the king receive this pill of truth, wrapped in sweet honey?"

"With great satisfaction. He thanked Cræsus, and called him his friend."

"But," continued the old man, "I seized the opportunity to dissuade him from his plan of fighting against the long-lived Ethiopians, the Ammonians, and the Carthaginians. Only fabulous stories are known of the first named, and if we fight them we shall make great sacrifices for little gain. The oasis of Ammon is difficult of access for a large army, because of the desert, which separates it from Egypt, and it seems to me criminal to fight against a god and his treasures, even though you do not worship him. As to

the Carthaginians, the event has already confirmed my prophecy. The sailors of our fleet are almost without exception Syrians and Phœnicians, and of course refused to attack their brethren. Cambyses laughed at my arguments, called me a coward, and, under the influence of wine, swore that he was capable of carrying out difficult undertakings, and subduing great nations, without Phanes and Bartja."

"What was the meaning of the allusion to you, my son?" asked Rhodopis.

"He won the battle of Pelusium, he, and no other," cried Zopyrus, interrupting his friend.

"But," said Croesus, "you and your friends should have been more careful, and have considered that it is dangerous to rouse the jealousy of a man like Cambyses. You always forget that his heart is sore, and that the smallest vexation causes him pain. Fate robbed him of the wife he loved and the friend who was dear to him; now you are doing your best to diminish the last thing which he has left to care for, his martial fame."

"Do not blame him," cried Bartja, seizing the old man's hand. "My brother was never unjust, and is far removed from being jealous of my luck, for I can scarcely call my well-timed attack a merit. You know that he sent me this splendid sword, one hundred noble horses, and a gold handmill¹ as a reward for my courage."

A slight feeling of anxiety awoke in Sappho's breast at Croesus' speech, but it vanished at her husband's confident words, and was quite forgotten when Zopyrus finished his wreath, and placed it on Rhodopis' brow.

Gyges offered his to the young mother, who pressed the snow-white water lilies on her brown curls, and looked so lovely in her simple adornment, that Bartja could not refrain from pressing a kiss on her brow, in spite of the lookers-on. This incident gave a cheerful turn to the conversation; each tried to do his best to increase the mirth; even Darius forgot his usual gravity, and began to jest and laugh with his friends, who were now supplied with various refreshments and wines.

¹ According to Herod. iii. 160 a golden handmill was the greatest mark of distinction which a Persian subject could receive from his sovereign.

When the sun vanished behind the Mokkatam mountains, the slaves placed beautifully carved chairs, footstools, and little tables, on the open deck. Thither the merry company now went, and a wonderfully beautiful sight, which surpassed all expectations, met their astonished gaze.

The festival of Neith, called by the Egyptians the lighting of lamps, and celebrated by a great illumination of all the houses in the country, had begun. The shores of the great stream resembled long, endless tracks of fire. Every temple, every house, every hut, was decked with lamps according to the wealth of the owner. At the gates of the country houses, and on the small turrets of the larger buildings, bright fires blazed in pitchpans, and sent forth thick clouds of smoke, which was blown about with the flags and streamers. The palms and sycamores gleamed silver in the moonlight, and were strangely mirrored in the waves which washed the shore, and shone red in the reflection of the flames. But the light was not sufficient to brighten the middle of the stream, where the bark of the pleasure-seekers lay. It seemed to them as if they went on in dark night between two bright days. Now and then boats, lighted with lamps, were visible, flying over the waters like fiery swans, and when they approached the shore it seemed as though they cut through molten iron.

Snow-white lotus flowers were rocking on the waves, and appeared to them like the eyes of the water. No sound from the shore reached their ears. The sounds carried by the north wind were too faint to reach the middle of the stream. The stroke of the oars and the monotonous chant of the sailors alone broke the deep silence of the night, which was robbed of its darkness. For a long while the friends gazed, without speaking, at the strange scene which seemed to glide past them. At last Zopyrus broke the silence, sighing deeply, and cried: "How I envy you, Bartja! If all were as it should be each of us would have his favourite wife with him now."

"Who forbade you to take one of your wives?" asked the happy husband.

"My five other partners," sighed the youth. "If I had allowed Parysatis, Orœtes' daughter, my last favourite, to

come with me alone, this lovely sight would have been my last, for there would be a pair of eyes less in the world to-morrow."

Bartja took Sappho's right hand in his, and said: "I think I shall be satisfied with one wife all my life."

The young mother returned the pressure of the beloved hand, and said, turning to Zopyrus: "I do not trust you, friend, for it seems to me you dread the anger of your wives less than you fear to break the customs of your home. I have already been told that my poor Bartja is blamed because he does not have me guarded by eunuchs, and allows me to share his pleasures."

"He spoils you dreadfully," returned Zopyrus, "and our women already begin to refer to his goodness and indulgence, if we are a little strict with them. In a few days there will be a rebellion of women at the king's door, and the Achæmenidæ, who escaped sharp swords and arrows, will be pierced by keen tongues and drowned in salt tears."

"O, you rude Persian," said Syloson, laughing. "We must teach you greater respect for the images of Aphrodite."

"You Greeks, indeed," answered the youth. "By Mithra, our women are as well off as yours. The Egyptian women alone enjoy unusual liberty."

"It is so," answered Rhodopis. "The inhabitants of this strange land have for centuries granted my weak sex the same privileges that they demand for themselves. In many respects they have even given us the advantage. For example, the Egyptian law commands not the sons, but the daughters, to cherish and provide for their aged parents. This shows how well the wise ancestors of this now subjugated people were able to judge woman's nature, how clearly they saw that we women are far superior to you men, where vigilance, care, attention, and devoted love are required. Do not scorn these worshippers of animals, whom I do not understand, and yet greatly admire, because Pythagoras, the master of all knowledge, assures me that the wisdom hidden in the teaching of the priests was as vast as the pyramids."

"And your great master was right," cried Darius. "You know that for several weeks I have had daily intercourse with Neithotep, the chief priest of Neith, whom I freed from his

captivity, and with old Onuphis, from both of whom I receive instruction. I have learned much that is new, and that I never dreamed of, from these two old men. I forget much that is sad when I listen to their teachings. They know the whole history of heaven and earth, they know the name of every king, the history of every important event during four thousand years. They know the course of the stars and the works of all artists and wise men of their nation for the same period; for all this is written in the great books which are preserved at Thebes in a palace which they call the hospital for the soul.¹ Their laws are a pure source of wisdom, the constitution of their state is adapted with great intelligence to the requirements of the land. I wish we could boast of the same order and regularity in our home. Their wisdom is founded on the use of numbers, with the help of which alone it is possible to calculate the path of the stars, to determine exactly what exists, and by lengthening or shortening the strings to regulate sounds. Number is the sole thing of which we are certain, which defies caprice and interpretation. Every race has its own ideas of right and wrong, every law can be rendered useless by circumstances, but the experience which is based on numbers cannot be overthrown. Who can dispute that twice two is four? Numbers determine with accuracy the contents of all that is; everything that is, is equal to its contents, therefore numbers are true existence, they are the essence of all things."

"In Mithra's name, stop, Darius, if you do not want to make me giddy," cried Zopyrus, interrupting his friend. "Whoever hears you would think you had lived all your life with these Egyptian dreamers, and never held a sword in your hand. What are numbers to us?"

"More than you think," said Rhodopis. "Pythagoras also owes his knowledge of those precepts which rank among the secrets of the Egyptian priests to that very Onuphis, who now initiates you into these mysteries, Darius. Come to see me soon, and let me tell you how

¹ The library at Thebes which, according to Diodorus, bore the inscription *ψυχῆς ἱατρειον*, "Hospital for the soul," is said to have contained 20,000 hermetic or hieratic books (Jamblichus, "De Myst. Egypt." viii. 1). It was kept in the Ramesseum, in the ruins of which Champollion discovered the rooms dedicated to its use.

beautifully the great Samian has brought these laws of number into unison with those of harmony. But see, there are the Pyramids."

All rose from their seats, and looked in silence at the wonderful sight before them. The gigantic, ancient tombs of mighty monarchs lay on the left bank of the river in the silver moonlight. Massive and awe-inspiring, they crushed the earth with their weight, and showed the creative power of the human will—a sign of the vanity of human greatness. Where was that Chufu, who cemented a mountain of stones with the sweat of his subjects? Where was aged Chafra, who despised the gods, and, relying on his own proud strength, is said to have closed the gates of the temples, in order to make himself and his name immortal, by a superhuman monument? Their empty sarcophagi, perhaps, show that the judges of the dead thought them unworthy of rest in the grave, unworthy of resurrection; while the architect of the third and most beautiful pyramid, Menkera, who was content with a smaller monument, and again opened the temple gates, was allowed to repose undisturbed in his coffin of blue basalt.¹

There lay the Pyramids in the silent night, illumined by the stars, guarded by the sentinel of the desert, the gigantic sphinx, overtopping the desolate rocks of the Libyan hills. At their feet in beautiful tombs lay the mummies of the faithful among those who raised them; and opposite the great monument of pious Menkera rose a temple, in which the priest of Osiris recited the prayers for the souls of the many dead who lay buried in the necropolis of Memphis. In the west, where the sun sets behind the Libyan hills, where the fertile land ceased and the desert began, the Memphians had built their tombs. The travellers looked towards the west, and remained in perfect silence, overcome with pious awe and reverent surprise.

When the north wind carried the swift boat past the

¹ Herodotus says the builders of the great pyramids were atheists, but the graves of their adherents at the base of these structures prove that their ill-fame was due to the hatred of the people, who could not forget the time of hard, forced labour, and branded the memory of their persecutors whenever it was possible.

place of death and the enormous dykes which guarded the city of Menes from the floods, and they approached the town of the Pharaohs, when at last millions of lights, which blazed everywhere in honour of Neith, became visible, the spell was broken, and loud exclamations of admiration were heard as they approached the temple of Ptah, the oldest building in the most ancient of countries.

Thousands of lamps lit up the house of the god; hundreds of fires burnt on the pylons, the ramparts, and the roof of the sanctuary. Between the lines of sphinxes which connected the various gates with the chief building burnt flaming torches; and the empty house of the sacred bull, Apis, gleamed in the flames like a chalk cliff in a tropical sunset. Flags and streamers waved over the glittering scene, flowers were arranged everywhere, and strains of music filled the air.

"Beautiful, beautiful," cried Rhodopis, delighted at the wonderful scene. "See how the coloured pillars and walls gleam, and how strangely the obelisks and sphinxes are shadowed on the smooth, yellow pavement!"

"And how mysterious," added Croesus, "the sacred grave of the god appears yonder in the gloom! I never saw such a scene before."

"But I," said Darius, "have seen even more wonderful things. You will believe me when I tell you that I have witnessed one of the celebrations of the mysteries of Neith."

"Describe it to us," cried his friends.

"Neithotep at first refused to admit me; but when I promised to remain concealed, and also to obtain the freedom of his child, he led me to his observatory, from which there is an extensive view, and told me that I was about to see a representation of the adventures of Osiris and his wife Isis.

"He had scarcely withdrawn when strange coloured lights made the grove so bright that I could see into its inmost recesses.

"Before me lay a perfectly clear lake,¹ surrounded by beautiful trees and gay flower-beds. On its surface were

¹ The still existing lake Sa-el-bagar.

golden boats, which contained lovely girls and boys in white robes, who chanted sweet songs. No one guided the boats, but they glided gracefully through the smooth water, as though steered by magic. In the midst of these boats was a large splendid ship, glittering with jewels. A beautiful boy seemed to steer it; but, strange to say, the helm which he directed was only a white lotus flower, the delicate petals of which scarcely touched the waters.

"In the middle of the boat, a beautiful woman, clad in regal splendour, reclined on silk cushions. By her side sat a supernaturally tall man, who wore a large crown, wound round with ivy on his waving curls, and a panther skin on his shoulders; he had a crook in his hand. In the stern of the ship, under a roof of roses, ivy, and lotus flowers,¹ stood a snow-white cow with golden horns, a purple covering on her back. The man was Osiris; the woman, Isis; the boy at the helm, Horus, the son of the divine pair; the cow was the sacred animal of the goddess. All the small boats went past the big vessel, and songs of joy arose as soon as they approached the deities, who showered flowers and fruit on the fair singers. Suddenly thunder was heard; its rumbling sounded louder and louder, until it became a terrific roar, when a man, horrible to behold, clad in the skin of a boar, and with wild, red hair surrounding a horrible face, came out of the dark grove, and, leaping into the lake, approached the ship, accompanied by seventy men of similar appearance.²

"Swift as the wind, the small boats fled, the lotus flower fell from the hand of the trembling boy at the helm. Quick as thought, the horrible monster rushed at Osiris, slew him, with the help of his companions, and threw the body into a mummy case, which was flung into the lake; the floating coffin vanished as though by magic. Meanwhile Isis, her hair flying loose, fled with lamentations to the shore in one of the small boats, and ran along the shores of the lake, accompanied by the maidens, who had also left the boats. With strange dances and songs of mourning, which

¹ The ivy was Osiris' plant, the cow was dedicated to Isis.

² This account is based on the account given by Plutarch in *Isis and Osiris*, 13-19, and Diodor., i. 21 and 22.

the maidens accompanied by curious movements of black Byssus cloths, they sought the body of the dead. The youths were not idle; but amid tumult and dancing they prepared a costly coffin for the vanished body of the god. When it was ready they joined the women of lamenting Isis, and wandered with them, singing mournful dirges, and searching along the shores of the water.

"Suddenly a soft voice was heard from an invisible source, which announced, in a song that increased in volume as it proceeded, that the body of the god had been carried by the current of the Mediterranean to Gebal,¹ in distant Phœnicia.

"The song, which the son of Neithotep, who was by my side, called the 'Wind of Rumour,' moved me deeply.

"Isis had scarcely heard the joyous news, when she threw off her mourning robes, and accompanied by the voices of her charming retinue, began a bright song of joy. Rumour had not lied, for the goddess found the sarcophagus and her husband's body on the north side of the lake. As soon as both had been brought to land amid dances, Isis threw herself on the beloved body, calling on Osiris' name, and covered the mummy of the dead god with kisses, while the youths prepared a beautiful tomb of lotus flowers and ivy. After the sarcophagus had been buried, Isis left the place of mourning to seek her son. She found him on the east side of the lake, where for some time I had observed a beautiful youth, who, with several companions of his own age, was exercising himself in wielding his weapons. He represented Horus, now grown up.

"While the mother was rejoicing over her beautiful child, thunder was again heard, and once more announced Typhon's approach. The monster rushed at the flowery grave of his victim, tore him from his sarcophagus, and cut the mummy into fourteen pieces, which, amid peals of thunder and trumpet blasts, he strewed along the edge of the water.

"When Isis again approached the tomb, she found nothing but faded flowers and an empty sarcophagus, but on the shores of the lake, in fourteen different places,

¹ Better known by its Greek name, Byblos.

fourteen fires flamed in strange colours. The bereaved goddess hastened towards the lights, while the youths joined Horus, and led by him, fought with Typhon on the other side of the lake.

"I did not know what to look at or listen to first. Here a terrible fight raged amidst roaring thunder, and the loud blasts of trumpets, and I could not bear to turn my eyes away. Yonder, beautiful female voices accompanied fairy-like dances with entrancing songs, for near each of the flames that had suddenly appeared, Isis had found a part of her husband's body, and now celebrated a festival of joy.

"I wish you could have seen the dances, Zopyrus. I cannot find words to describe the graceful movements of the girls, I cannot tell you how beautiful it was when they crowded together in tumult and confusion, and suddenly stood ranged in faultlessly regular lines opposite each other, quickly changing new confusion for new order. Blue rays of light darted from the whirling lines, for every dancer had a mirror between her shoulders; its oscillation produced lightning, in its repose it reflected the image of the maidens.

"Isis had scarcely found the last limb but one of Osiris when triumphant blasts and songs were heard from the opposite shore of the lake.

"Horus had defeated Typhon, and now forced his way through the open gate of the Nether World, which was on the west of the lake, guarded by a fierce female hippopotamus, in order to free his father.

"Beautiful music from harp and flute sounded nearer and nearer. Clouds of incense arose, a rosy light spread over the grove, and became brighter and brighter, and Osiris came out of the open gate of the Nether World led by his son. Isis hastened into the arms of her liberated husband, who had risen from the dead, gave beautiful Horus a lotus flower instead of a sword, and scattered flowers and fruit, while Osiris seated himself under a canopy wreathed with ivy, and received the homage of all the spirits of earth and of Amenti."¹

¹ The Nether World. Egyptian Amenti, really the west, the kingdom of death, whither the soul returns after the death of the body, as

Darius ceased, and Rhodopis said: "We thank you for your charming account, but would be still more obliged if you would explain the meaning of this strange drama, which undoubtedly possesses a higher signification."

"You are quite right," answered Darius, "but I must not tell you what I know, for I promised Neithotep not to reveal it."

"Shall I tell you," asked Rhodopis, "what meaning I attach to the story? According to various hints of Pythagoras and Onuphis, Isis seems to me the earth, Osiris, moisture, or the Nile, which makes everything fertile; Horus, young spring; Typhon, the drought which scorches up everything. The latter destroys Osiris, or moisture. The gracious earth, deprived of the power of generating, seeks her beloved husband with laments, and finds him in the cool north, where the Nile empties itself. Horus, the young productive power of nature, has grown up, and conquers Typhon, or drought. Osiris, like the generative power of the earth, is only apparently dead; he returns from the Nether World, and with his wife, generous earth, rules the fertile valley of the Nile once more."

"And because the dead god behaved well in the Nether World," said Zopyrus, laughing, "he received at the end of the wonderful story the homage of all the inhabitants of Hamestegân, Duzakh, and Gorothman,¹ or whatever I am to call the dwelling of Egyptian souls."

"It is called Amenti," said Darius, following Zopyrus' joyous lead. "But the story of the divine couple symbolises not only the life of nature, but also that of the human soul, which, when the body dies, like murdered Osiris never ceases to live."

"Thank you," he returned, "I will remember it in case I die in Egypt. But next time I must look on at the drama at any cost."

"I share your curiosity," said Rhodopis; "age makes us curious."

"You will always be young," interrupted Darius. "Your

the sun after its setting. An inscription dating from the time of the Ptolemies actually calls Amenti, Hades.

¹ Hamestegân, the residence of those whose good and evil deeds are equal. Duzakh, the hell, Gorothman, the paradise of the Persians.

words have remained beautiful as your face, and your mind clear as your eyes."

"Pardon me," cried Rhodopis, as though she had not heard these flattering words, "if I interrupt you. The mention of eyes reminds me of the oculist, Nebenchari, and my memory has become so weak that I must ask you about him before I forget. I do not hear the oculist spoken of now to whom noble Cassandane owes so much."

"Poor man," cried Darius. "During the journey to Pelusium he already avoided all society, and even disdained to speak with his countryman, Onuphis. Only his thin old servant was allowed to serve him and associate with him. After the battle his whole appearance changed. He came to the king with radiant face, and asked to be allowed to accompany him to Sais, and choose two of the citizens as slaves. Cambyses thought he ought not to refuse any request expressed by the benefactor of his mother, and gave him full authority. As soon as he had reached Amasis' capital, he hastened to the temple of Neith, and ordered the arrest of the chief priest, who had placed himself at the head of those who were hostile to the Persians, and of an oculist whom he hated. He told them that as a punishment for burning certain papers, they would, for the rest of their lives, be obliged to render the lowest services to a Persian in a foreign land, to whom he would sell them. I was a witness of the scene, and can assure you that I trembled before the Egyptian when he made this announcement to his foes. Neithotep listened to him in silence and said, when Nebenchari ended: 'If you betrayed your country for the sake of your burnt writings, foolish son, you acted both unjustly and unwisely. I preserved your valuable works carefully, placed them in our temple, and sent a complete copy to the library at Thebes. We burned nothing but the letters of Amasis to your father, and a worthless old box. Psamtik and Petammon looked on at the fire, and resolved, in gratitude for your writings, and in return for the manuscripts which we were unfortunately obliged to destroy in order to preserve Egypt, to raise to you a new tomb in the necropolis. On its walls you can see, beautifully painted, the pictures of the deities to whom you devoted yourself,

the most sacred chapters of the book of the dead, and many pictures referring to you.'"

The physician turned pale, and let them show him first his books and then his beautiful sepulchre. Hereupon he freed his slaves, who were, however, brought to Memphis as prisoners, and went home, staggering like an intoxicated man, constantly putting his hand to his brow. There he made a will, in which he appointed the grandchild of his old servant Hib the heir of all his possessions. He pretended to be unwell, and lay down on his couch. Next morning he was found dead. He had poisoned himself with the terrible strychnos juice.

"Unhappy man," cried Cræsus. "Misled by the gods, a traitor to his country, he reaped despair in place of vengeance."

"I am sorry for him," murmured Rhodopis. "But see, the rowers are already drawing in their oars. We have reached our destination. Yonder your litters and chariots await you. This has been a pleasant expedition. Farewell, let us see you soon at Naucratis. I shall at once return with Syloson and Theopompus. Give hundreds of kisses to little Parmys in my name, and tell Melitta never to take the child out at noon. It is dangerous for the eyes. Good night, Cræsus, good night, my dear son."

The Persians left the ship, waving their hands in farewell. Bartja turned round again, slipped and fell on the landing stage.

Zopyrus hurried up, and cried to his friend, who had sprung up without his help: "Take care, Bartja; it forebodes misfortune if you fall when landing. It happened to me when we landed at Naucratis."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SHOOTING MATCH.

DURING the expedition on the Nile, which we have just described, the ambassador, Prexaspes, had returned from the long-lived Ethiopians, to whom Cambyses had sent him. He praised the stature and strength of the men, described the road to them as impracticable for a large army, and had wonderful stories to relate. The Ethiopians were accustomed to make the handsomest and strongest man of their race king, and they obeyed him unconditionally. Many of them lived to the age of one hundred and twenty years, and some still longer. Their food was boiled meat, their drink new milk. They washed in a spring whose water smelt of violets, gave a peculiar sleekness to the skin, and was so light that wood sank in it. Their prisoners had golden fetters, as other metals were very rare and dear. They covered their dead with gypsum, poured a glassy substance over them, and kept the columns which they had thus formed for a year in the house. Here they sacrificed to the dead, and afterwards placed them round the town in long rows.¹

The king of this strange race accepted with scorn the gifts which Cambyses sent him, and said that he knew very well that the Persians did not care for his friendship, and that Prexaspes had only come to spy out the land. If the king of Asia were just, he would content himself with his great realm, and not wish to reduce to servitude a people who had done him no injury.

"Take this bow to your king," he said, "and advise him not to march against us till the Persians can bend bows like this one as easily as we can. Besides, Cambyses

¹ Herod., iii. 20-25.

ought to thank the gods that the Ethiopians have not yet thought of trying to add foreign territory to their own."

With these words he unstrung his bow, and gave it to *Prexaspes*, who brought the huge weapon to his ruler.

Cambyses laughed at the boastful African, invited his nobles to try the bow next day, and rewarded *Prexaspes* for his difficult journey, and the skilful way in which he had accomplished his mission. Intoxicated as usual, he lay down, and fell into a restless sleep. When he awoke he had dreamt that *Bartja* sat on the throne of Persia, and touched the heavens with his head.

This dream, for the interpretation of which neither *Mobeds* nor *Chaldeans* were needed, first aroused his anger, and then made him reflect.

"Have you not given your brother reason to seek vengeance?" said the restless man to himself. "Has he forgotten that you threw him into a dungeon, and condemned him to death, though he was innocent? Would not the *Achæmenidæ* help him if you raised your hand against him? What have I done to win the love of these venal courtiers? What shall I do in the future to win it? Is there a single person left, since *Nitetis* died and the marvellous Greek fled, whom I can trust, or on whose affection I can rely?"

These questions excited his feverish blood so much that he sprang from his couch, and cried: "Love will have nothing to do with me, I will have nothing to do with love. Let others try kindness, I must use severity, or I shall fall into the hands of those who hate me because I was just, and punished great crimes severely. They flatter me to my face, behind my back they curse me. Even the gods are my foes, for they rob me of those I love, and do not even grant me descendants and the martial fame which is my due. Is *Bartja* so much better than I, that he should receive a hundredfold what I must do without? Love, friendship, honour, children, all come to him like rivers to the ocean, while my heart is blighted like the desert. But I am still king, and can and will show him which is the stronger of us two. Let his head touch the sky! Only one can be great in Persia. He or I, I or he. In a few days I will send him back to Asia as satrap of Bactria.

There he may let his wife sing songs to him, and may act as nurse to his child, while I win unimpaired fame in my campaign against the Ethiopians. Bring me my garments and a good draught of wine. I will show the Persians that I am fit to be king of Ethiopia, and will beat them all in shooting with the bow. Another draught. I will bend the bow though its string were a rope and the wood a cedar."

With these words he emptied a huge cup of wine at one draught, and fully conscious of his tremendous strength, and certain of success, he went to the palace garden, where the nobles of his realm who were awaiting him, prostrated themselves, and received him with loud shouts of joy. Pillars had been quickly erected between the clipped hedges, and the straight rows of trees, and they were connected with scarlet cords. Red, yellow, and dark blue cloths, attached to gold and silver rings, fluttered from them. Numerous benches of gilt wood stood around in a large circle, and invited to repose, while swift cup-bearers brought wine in splendid vessels, and offered it to those who had assembled to try the bow.

At a sign from the king the Achæmenidæ rose.

He overlooked their ranks, and saw with joy that his brother was absent. Now Prexaspes gave his ruler the Ethiopian bow, and pointed to the target, which was placed at some distance. Cambyses laughed at its size, weighed it in his right hand, invited his followers to try their luck with him, and handed the bow to old Hystaspes, the chief of the Achæmenidæ. While first he, and then the heads of the six noblest families of Persia, tried in vain to bend the huge bow, the king emptied cup after cup, and became more gay the farther removed they seemed from succeeding in the task set by the Ethiopian.

At last Darius, who was famed for his skill in the use of the bow, seized the weapon, and tried his strength. But in spite of all his efforts he could not succeed in bending the hard wood. The king, pleased at the result, nodded to him cheerfully, and, certain of victory, looked at his relations and nobles, and cried: "Give me the bow, Darius. I will show you that there is only one man in Persia who deserves the name of king, that only one may dare to attack the Ethiopians, that only one man can bend the bow."

He seized the weapon with his strong hand, grasped the

ebony bow with his left hand, and the thick string made of the entrails of a lion with his right, took a deep breath, bent his powerful back, and pulled, and pulled, with all his strength, exerting himself to the utmost, till his muscles threatened to tear and the veins on his forehead to burst; he did not disdain even to use his feet to conquer the monster, but it was all in vain. After a quarter of an hour of superhuman exertion, his strength gave way, the wood, which he had bent further than Darius, sprang back, and defied all his efforts. At last, when he felt perfectly exhausted, he threw down the bow furiously, and cried: "The Ethiopian is a liar. No mortal has ever bent this weapon. What my arms cannot do no other arm can accomplish. In three days we march against the Ethiopians. There I will challenge the cheat to combat, and show you which of us is the stronger. Lift up the bow, Prexaspes, and preserve it carefully, for I intend to strangle the black liar with the string. This wood is truly harder than iron. I would gladly call the man who could bend it my master, for he must indeed be of better stuff than I."

He had scarcely spoken when Bartja entered the circle of Persians. Rich garments fell round his splendid figure, and his face was radiant with joy and conscious pride. He nodded pleasantly as he passed through the lines of the Achæmenidæ, who greeted the handsome youth with glad admiration, went straight to his brother, kissed his garment, and cried, while he looked cheerfully into his sombre eyes: "I am a little late, and need your forgiveness, my gracious lord and brother. Or have I come at the right time? Indeed, I see no arrow in the target, and conclude that you, the best shot in the world, have not yet tried your strength. You look at me questioningly. Well, I must confess that our child delayed me a short time. The little creature laughed for the first time to-day, and was so sweet with her mother that I forgot all about the hour. Laugh at my folly. I can scarcely excuse myself. Look, the little thing actually tore my star from my chain. Well, I think, dear brother, you will give me another if my arrow pierces the bull's-eye. May I begin to shoot, or will you, my king, make the beginning?"

"Give him the bow, Prexaspes," returned Cambyses, not deigning to look at the youth.

When Bartja had taken the weapon, and was about to test bow and string carefully, the king laughed mockingly, and cried: "I think, by Mithra, that you try to win the bow as you would the hearts of men with smart looks. Give Prexaspes the bow. It is easier to play with beautiful women and laughing children than with this weapon, which defies the strength of real men."

Bartja coloured with anger at these words, which were spoken very bitterly, took the huge arrow which lay before him, in his right hand, silently placed himself opposite the target, summoned all his strength, drew the string with a superhuman effort, bent the bow, and sent forth the feathered arrow, whose iron point pierced deep into the middle of the target, while the wooden shaft broke into splinters.

Most of the Achæmenidæ broke out into loud rejoicings at this wonderful proof of strength, while the best friends of the victor turned pale and looked in silence, now at the king, who trembled with rage, now at Bartja, who was as radiant with conscious pride.

Cambyses was terrible to behold. It was as though the arrow in the target had pierced his own heart, his dignity, his strength, his honour. His eyes flashed, there was a roaring in his ears as though the storm-wind drove wild waves past him, his cheeks flushed, his right hand convulsively clutched the arm of Prexaspes, who stood by him. He knew well how to interpret the pressure of the royal hand, and murmured: "Poor Bartja!"

At last the king succeeded in regaining his composure. In silence he threw his brother a gold chain, ordered his nobles to follow him, and left the garden to wander up and down his room, and drown his anger in wine. Suddenly he seemed to have formed a resolution, ordered all his courtiers to leave the hall except Prexaspes, and when they were alone, he cried to him hoarsely, and with drunken look: "I can no longer endure this life. Rid me of my foe, and I will call you my friend and benefactor."

Prexaspes trembled, threw himself at his ruler's feet, and raised his hands in entreaty. Cambyses was too

intoxicated, and too much blinded by his hate, to understand his courtier's gesture. He thought the ambassador meant to assure him of his obedience by kneeling at his feet, signed to him to rise, and whispered as though he feared to hear his own words: "Act quickly and secretly. No one but we two must know of the death of this child of fortune; as you value your life go, and when your work is done, take what you will out of the treasury. But be careful, for the boy has a strong arm, and understands how to win friends. Think of your wife and children when he tempts you with soft words."

At these words he emptied another cup of unmixed wine, staggered with uncertain step through the door of the room, and cried, turning his back on Prexaspes, and as though he spoke to himself in a hoarse voice, with heavy tongue and clenched fist: "Woe to you and yours if this woman's hero, this child of fortune, this thief of honour, remains alive."

Long after the king had left the hall, Prexaspes stood motionless. The ambitious, but by no means ignoble, servant of the despot was crushed by the horror of the task assigned to him. He knew that death or disgrace awaited him and his if he refused to carry out the criminal command of the king; but he loved Bartja, and he recoiled from the thought of committing a common murder. A dreadful struggle arose in his breast, and raged long after he had left the palace. On the way to his house he met Cræsus and Darius. He hid behind the projecting door of a large Egyptian house, for he thought they must see in his face that he was treading the path of crime. When they passed him, he heard Cræsus say: "I have severely reproved Bartja for his unlucky exhibition of strength; and we must thank the gods that Cambyzes did not attack him in his fury. Now he has taken my advice, and gone to Sais with his wife. The king must not see him for a few days, for his anger might easily awake again at sight of him, and a ruler can always find abandoned servants—"

His words died away in the distance, and Prexaspes started as though Cræsus had accused him of the shameful deed, and he resolved that whatever happened he would not stain his hands with the blood of a friend. He drew

himself up to his full height, and went on till he reached the house appointed for his residence. At the door his two sons sprang towards him; they had crept away from the playground of the young Achæmenidæ, who as usual followed the army and the king, in order to greet their father for a minute. He pressed the pretty children to his breast with unusual emotion, which he himself could not understand, and embraced them again, when they declared that they must return to the playground, if they did not wish to be punished. In his house he found his favourite wife playing with her youngest child, a pretty little girl. Again that strange emotion seized him. He controlled it in order not to betray his secret to his young wife, and soon retired to his chamber.

Meanwhile night had fallen. Sorely tempted he tossed sleeplessly on his couch. The thought that his refusal to fulfil the king's behest would expose his wife and children to destruction, appeared before his mind in all its terror. He lost the strength to keep his resolution, and the very words of Cræsus which had obtained a temporary victory for his nobler feelings, now caused them to be conquered. "A ruler always finds abandoned servants." These words certainly disgraced him, but they reminded him that if he defied the king, a hundred others would be ready to obey his commands.

This thought soon dominated over every other idea. He sprang from his couch, tested the various daggers, which were ranged in order along the walls of his bedroom, and laid the sharpest on a little table near the divan. Then he walked up and down and went repeatedly to the window, to see if it was not yet day, and to cool his heated brow.

When at last the darkness of night yielded to bright daylight, and the gong which summoned the boys to prayers again reminded him of his sons, he once more tested his dagger. When a richly dressed host of courtiers rode past his house to go to the king, he put it in his belt. When he heard the gay laughter of his youngest child in the women's apartment, he placed his tiara on his head with some haste, and without bidding his wife farewell, he went, accompanied by several slaves, to the

Nile, entered a boat and bade the oarsmen take him to Sais.

Bartja had followed Croesus' advice a few hours after the momentous shooting match, and started for Sais with his young wife. There he found Rhodopis who, instead of returning to Naucratis, had followed an irresistible impulse and gone to Sais. After the expedition, Bartja had fallen on landing, and with her own eyes she had seen that an owl flew close past him from the left. These evil omens sufficed to agitate her mind, which was by no means superior to the superstitions of her age, and strengthened her desire to be near the young couple. She quickly resolved, on awaking from a restless sleep troubled by confused, evil dreams, to await her grandchild in Sais.

The young couple rejoiced at the arrival of the beloved, unexpected visitor, and led Rhodopis to the rooms that were ready for her, after she had played with her little great-grandchild, Parmys, to her heart's content. They were the same rooms in which unhappy Tachot had spent the last months of her life. Rhodopis looked with deep emotion at all the trifles which betrayed not only the sex and age of the dead but also her tastes and character. On the dressing-table stood numerous ointment-boxes and little phials with scents, paints and oils. One box, which was an exact representation of a Nile goose, and another, on one side of which a lute-player was painted, had once contained the costly gold ornaments of the princess. That metal mirror, the handle of which represented a sleeping maiden, had once reflected the faintly flushed face of the dead girl. The whole arrangement of the room, from the dainty bed on lion's claws to the delicately carved ivory combs, showed that the former inhabitant of these rooms had loved the outward adornments of life. The golden sistrum and beautifully worked nabla, the strings of which had been broken long ago, pointed to the musical tastes of the princess, while the broken ivory spindle in the corner, and a few nets of beads which had been begun, showed that she had been fond of feminine work.

Rhodopis surveyed all these things with melancholy satisfaction, and made them her starting point for imagining a life which differed very little from what the reality had been.

At last, urged by curiosity and sympathy, she approached a large, painted chest, and raised the light lid. There she found first a few dried flowers, then a ball which a skilful hand had wrapped in leaves and roses, faded long ago, then a number of amulets of various shape, one representing the goddess of truth, another concealing, in a golden box, a piece of papyrus covered with magic formulæ. Then her eyes fell on some letters written in Greek characters. She took them and read them by the light of the lamp. Nitetis had written them from Persia to her reputed sister, of whose illness she knew nothing. When Rhodopis put down the letters, her eyes were filled with tears. The maiden's secret was revealed to her. She knew that Tachot had loved Bartja, that she had received the withered flowers from his hand, and had wrapped the ball in roses, because he had thrown it to her. The amulets were probably intended to cure her sick heart or to awaken love in the prince.

When at last she was about to replace the letters she touched some cloths, which seemed to fill the bottom of the box, and found that they covered a hard, round substance. She raised them and found underneath a bust of coloured wax, which represented Nitetis with such life-like fidelity that Rhodopis could not repress an exclamation of surprise, and for a long time she could not turn her eyes from the wonderful handiwork of Theodorus of Samos.

Then she lay down and fell asleep thinking of the unhappy fate of the Egyptian princess.

The following morning, she went to the garden, which we entered during Amasis' lifetime, and under a bower of vines she found those whom she sought.

Sappho sat on a chair of light wicker-work. On her lap lay a naked baby, which stretched its hands and feet, now towards its father, who knelt on the ground in front of his young wife, now towards its mother, who bent down laughing. When the child hid its fingers in the curls and beard of the young hero, he drew his head back gently so that he might feel the strength of his darling and let her feel that she had actually pulled her father's hair. When the active little feet touched his face, he took them in his hand and kissed the pretty, rosy toes, and the sole;

which was still as soft and delicate as the cheek of a maiden. When little Parmys clasped one of his fingers, he pretended that he was unable to free himself, and kissed the plump shoulder, or the dimples in her elbows, or even the snow-white back of the pretty child. Sappho shared in this innocent sport, and was trying to direct the child's attention exclusively towards her father.

Now and then, she bent down over the child to kiss the fresh, slightly moist neck, or the red, childish lips, and her brow sometimes touched the curls of her husband, who then always robbed the child of the kiss which she had just received.

Rhodopis looked on for a long while unseen, and prayed to the gods, with tears in her eyes, that they would preserve the intense and pure happiness of her darlings. At last she approached the bower, bade the young couple good morning, and praised old Melitta, who had come with a great sunshade to carry little Parmys out of the glaring sunlight and take her to bed.

The old slave had been appointed head nurse of the royal child, and filled her office with a dignity comic to behold. She clothed herself in rich Persian garments; she felt true bliss in issuing commands, and kept the slaves under her, whom she treated with great condescension, constantly employed.

Sappho followed the old slave, after she had laid her arm round her husband's neck, and whispered, coaxingly: "Tell grandmother everything, and ask if she agrees with you."

Before Bartja could answer, she kissed him, and hastily followed the old woman, who strode on with dignity.

The prince looked after her smiling, and could not sufficiently admire her light step and perfect figure. At last he turned to Rhodopis, and asked: "Do you not think she has grown lately?"

"It looks like it," was the answer. "Maidenhood gives a peculiar charm and grace to a woman; but it is motherhood which first confers real dignity on her. It raises a woman's head. • We think she has grown physically when she is in reality elevated by the consciousness of having fulfilled her destiny."

"Yes, I think she is happy," returned Bartja. "Yesterday we differed for the first time. When she left us just now, she whispered to me to tell you the cause of our dispute, and I gladly obey her, for I esteem your wisdom and experience as highly as I love her childish inexperience."

Bartja now told the story of the fatal shooting match, and concluded with the words: "Cræsus blamed my imprudence; but I know my brother, and know that in anger he is capable of any act of violence, and that he might easily have killed me at the moment of defeat; but when his anger is over, he will forget my superior skill, and only try in future to excel me in great deeds. A year ago he was the best shot in Persia, and would be still if drink and those evil convulsions had not weakened his tremendous strength. On the other hand, I feel my strength increase every day."

"Pure happiness," interrupted Rhodopis, "strengthens a man's arm as it heightens a woman's beauty, while intemperance and troubles of the soul are more certain to disorder body and mind than illness and age. Beware of your brother, my son, for his once noble soul may lose its greatness, just as his once powerful arm has grown weak. Trust my experience, which teaches me that he who becomes the slave of one ignoble passion seldom remains master of his other passions. Besides, no one finds it so hard to bear humiliation as he who feels his power decline. Beware of your brother, and trust the voice of experience more than your own heart, which, because it is noble, is inclined to think all others noble."

"Your words," returned Bartja, "show me that you will agree with Sappho. She asked me to leave Egypt, and to return with her to Persia, though she would find it hard to part from you. She thinks Cambyses will forget his anger if he neither sees me, nor hears of me. I thought her too anxious till now, and was unwilling to be excluded from the campaign against the Ethiopians."

"But," interrupted Rhodopis, "I must entreat you to follow her advice, which was inspired by true instinct and love. The gods know what sorrow it will cause me to part from you; but I repeat, over and over again, return to Persia, and remember that only fools risk life and happiness

without an object. The war with Ethiopia is madness, for you will not be conquered by its black inhabitants, but by heat, thirst, and the horrors of the desert. This refers to the whole campaign; but as for you, you must remember that you risk your own life and the happiness of your family in vain, if no fame is to be won, while you would again excite the anger and jealousy of your brother, if you distinguished yourself. Return to Persia, my son, as soon as possible."

Bartja was about to oppose doubts and objections, when he saw Prexaspes advance towards them with pale face. After the usual greetings and questions, the ambassador whispered to the youth that he must speak with him alone; and when Rhodopis had left them, he said, playing with the rings on his fingers in an embarrassed way: "The king has sent me to you. You vexed him yesterday by your exhibition of strength. He does not wish to see you for some time, and, therefore, orders you to go to Arabia, and buy as many camels as possible there. These animals, which can bear thirst for a long time, are to carry the water and provisions for our army to Ethiopia. Our journey must not be delayed. Take leave of your wife, and be ready to start before dark, in obedience to the king's command. You will be away at least a month. I will accompany you as far as Pelusium. Cassandane desires to have your wife and child near her meanwhile. Send them as soon as possible to Memphis, where they will be safe in charge of the king's great mother."

Bartja listened to Prexaspes without noticing the abrupt, embarrassed manner of the ambassador. He was pleased with the apparent moderation of his brother, and with the commission which raised all doubts as to his departure from Egypt. He gave his hand to his pretended friend to kiss, and invited him to follow him to the palace.

When it began to grow cooler, he took a brief, affectionate farewell of his wife, and of the child which lay in Melitta's arms, bade Sappho go to Cassandane as soon as possible, said laughingly to Rhodopis that this time she had been mistaken in her estimate of a man's character—that is to say, of his brother's,—and sprang on his horse.

When Prexaspes was about to mount, Sappho whispered to him: "Take care of him, and remind the madcap of me

and of the child, whenever he is about to expose himself to unnecessary danger."

"I must leave him at Pelusium," answered the ambassador, arranging the bridle of his horse, in order to avoid the young wife's eyes.

"Then the gods will protect him," cried Sappho, seizing the hand of her beloved husband, and bursting into uncontrollable tears. He looked down at her, and saw that his wife, usually so confident, was weeping. Then a painful feeling, such as he had never yet experienced, seized him too. He bent down affectionately, put his strong arm round her, lifted her up, and while she stood with her foot on his, which rested in the stirrup, he pressed her to his heart, as though to say: "Farewell for ever!" Then he gently placed her on the ground again, took his child once more, kissed her, and jestingly bade her be a comfort to her mother, called out a few hearty words of farewell to Rhodopis, gave his horse the spurs, so that it reared wildly, and, accompanied by Prexaspes, galloped through the palace gates. As soon as the sound of the horses' hoofs had died away in the distance, Sappho flung herself on her grandmother's breast, and, in spite of her grave exhortations and severe reproof, wept unceasingly.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE KING'S REMORSE.

ON the morning of the day which followed the shooting match, Cambyses was seized by so violent an attack of his illness that he lay in his room for forty-eight hours, sick in body and mind—now he sank down utterly exhausted, now he raved like a madman.

When his full consciousness returned on the third day, he remembered the dreadful commission which Prexaspes had, perhaps, already executed. He trembled at this possibility as he had never trembled before; summoned the eldest son of the ambassador, who filled the high office of cupbearer, and learned from him that his father had left Memphis without taking leave of anyone. Then he sent for Darius, Zopyrus, and Gyges, who he knew were Bartja's best friends, and asked them where their friend was.

When he heard that he was in Sais, he ordered the young men to hasten thither, and bade them send Prexaspes to Memphis at once, if they chanced to meet him. The young Achæmenidæ could not understand the king's strange behaviour and eagerness; but they set forth immediately, for they foreboded nothing good.

Meanwhile Cambyses could not rest, cursed his drunkenness in silence, and did not touch wine for a whole day. When he met his mother in the palace garden of the Pharaohs, he avoided her, feeling that he could not meet her gaze.

Another week passed, which seemed to him as long as a year, but Prexaspes did not return. He sent again and again for the cup-bearer, and asked him if his father had not returned; each time he was answered in the negative.

When the sun set on the thirteenth day, Cassandane asked him to visit her. He went to her rooms at once, for he longed to see his mother's face. It seemed to him as though it must restore his lost sleep. After he had greeted her with a tenderness that surprised her, all the more because she was not used to such demonstrations from him, he learned that Bartja's wife had arrived under strange circumstances, and desired to offer him a gift. He at once sent for her, and learned from her that Prexaspes had brought her husband orders to go to Arabia, and had bidden her go to Memphis in Cassandane's name. The king turned pale at this news, and looked with pain at his brother's fair wife. The young Greek felt that something strange was passing in the king's mind, and, alarmed by dreadful forebodings, she gave him with trembling hands the gift she had brought him.

"My husband sent you this," she said, pointing to the wax image of Nitetis, which lay hidden in an artistically worked box. Rhodopis had advised her to bring it in Bartja's name, as though it were a gift of reconciliation for the angry king.

Cambyes gave the box, the contents of which did not seem to rouse his curiosity much, to a eunuch, said a few words to his sister-in-law which were meant to express his thanks, and left the house at once without asking after Atossa, whom he seemed quite to have forgotten. He had thought the visit would do him good and calm him, but the news had robbed him of his last hope and therefore of his rest. Prexaspes must already have committed the murder, or at that moment perhaps was raising the dagger to pierce the young man's heart. How should he meet his mother after Bartja's death? How should he answer her questions and those of the beautiful woman who had looked at him with such touching anxiety in her large eyes?

A cold shudder passed over him, when an inner voice cried to him that his brother's murder was an unnatural deed of fear, of cowardice, of injustice. The thought that he was an assassin seemed intolerable to him. He had sent many a man to death without a pang, but it had been done in open fight or before the eyes of the world. He was the king, and what he did was right. If he had

killed Bartja with his own hand, he could have calmed his conscience, but he had got rid of him secretly, he had ordered his assassination after he had given evidence of his manly excellence which was worthy of the highest fame, and therefore Cambyses was tortured with a shame and remorse unknown till then, and was overcome by wild fury at his crime. He began to despise himself. He no longer felt that he only desired and did what was right, and he thought that all those who died by his orders were, like Bartja, innocent victims of his wrath. To drown these thoughts, which became more and more intolerable, he again turned to the intoxicating juice of the grape. This time his comforter became a torment for body and mind. His frame, weakened by drink and epilepsy, seemed ready to give way under the many cruel emotions of the last few months. He alternately shivered with cold or burned with fever, and was obliged to seek his couch.

While he was being undressed, he remembered his brother's gift. He had the box brought and opened, and bade his attendants leave him; he could not avoid thinking of Nitetis when he saw the Egyptian paintings which covered the box, and asking himself what the deceased would have thought of his last deed. Feverish and confused, he bent over the box at last, took from it the wax image of the beautiful head, and stared with horror at its dull, motionless eyes. The resemblance was so great and his mental powers were so weakened by wine and fever that he thought he was bewitched. But he did not turn his eyes from the beloved face. Suddenly it seemed to him that the image moved its eyes. Wild terror seized him. With a convulsive gesture, he flung the animated image against the wall, the hollow, brittle wax broke into a thousand pieces, and he sank back groaning on his couch. From that moment his fever increased in violence. The unhappy man in his delirium thought he saw exiled Phanes, who sang a frivolous Greek song and abused him shamefully, so that he clenched his fist in fury. Then he saw Cræsus, his friend, who threatened him, and again uttered the words with which he had warned him when he was about to have Bartja executed for Nitetis' sake: "Beware of shedding your brother's blood, for know its fumes will rise up to

heaven and become clouds, which will darken the days of the murderer, and finally hurl a dart of vengeance down on him."

In his delirium the metaphor seemed turned to reality. He thought a bloody rain fell on him from dark clouds and the horrible moisture wetted his clothes and hands. When it ceased at last, and he approached the shores of the Nile to purify himself, Nitetis came towards him with the sweet smile with which Theodorus had represented her. Enchanted at the lovely apparition, he flung himself at her feet, and seized her hand. He had scarcely touched her when a drop of blood appeared on the tip of each of her delicate fingers, and she turned her back on him with horror. Now Cambyses humbly implored the vision to pardon him and to return; but she remained inexorable. Then he grew furious and threatened her first with his anger, then with terrible punishment, and at last when Nitetis answered his words with a low, mocking laugh, he dared to throw his dagger at her. Then she crumbled into a thousand pieces as the wax image had done when it broke against the wall, but the mocking laugh continued and grew louder and louder, many voices joining in and trying to outdo each other in scorn and contempt. And the voices of Bartja and Nitetis sounded clearest in his ear and seemed to scorn him most bitterly, and at last he was no longer able to bear the horrible sounds and stopped his ears, and when this did not help him, he hid his head in the burning sand of the desert, and then in the icy Nile, and again in the glowing sand, and then again in the cold water, till his senses left him. When he woke, at last, he could not distinguish between dream and reality. He had lain down at night, and the sun which gilded his couch with its parting rays showed him that it was not the dawn as he expected, but the night which was approaching. He could not be mistaken, for he heard the singing of the priests, who uttered their last farewells to parting Mithra.

Now he heard people stirring behind a curtain at the head of his couch. He wished to move, but found that he was too weak. At last, when he had in vain tried to distinguish between dream and reality and between reality and dream, he called his attendants and the other courtiers

who were wont to be present when he rose. Immediately, not only they, but also his mother, Prexaspes, many learned magi, and a few unknown Egyptians, entered, and told him that he had been ill of a violent fever for weeks, and had only been saved from death by the grace of the gods, the skill of the physicians, and the unwearied care of his mother. Then he looked questioningly at Prexaspes, and lost consciousness again; next morning, after a healthy sleep, he awoke with renewed strength.

Four days later he was strong enough to sit in an arm-chair, and to question Prexaspes about the sole matter which occupied his mind. The ambassador wished to answer evasively, because his master was still weak; but when the king raised his thin hand threateningly, and looked at him with a glance which was still terrible, Prexaspes delayed no longer, and said, thinking that he was giving great satisfaction to Cambyzes: 'Rejoice, my lord. The youth who dared to try and diminish your fame is no more. This hand slew him, and buried his body by Baal Zephon. No one saw the deed save the sand of the desert and the barren waves of the Red Sea. No one knows of it, save you and I and the gulls and ravens that fly round his grave.'

A piercing cry of fury burst from the lips of the king, who broke down, suffered from renewed attacks of fever, and uttered wild, delirious ravings. Weeks passed, and each day threatened to be the king's last. His strong body at length overcame the dangerous relapses; but his mind had not been able to withstand the demons of fever, and remained disordered and impaired till his end.

When he was allowed to leave his room, and could ride and bend the bow again, he gave himself up more than ever to wine, and lost all power of self-control.

Besides this, his disordered mind was filled with the hallucination that Bartja was not dead, but had been changed into the bow of the king of Ethiopia, and that the Kuerer of his dead father had ordered him to restore his brother to his former shape by conquering the black race.

This idea, which he confided to everyone around him as a great secret, haunted him day and night, and left him no

peace till he started for Ethiopia with a large army. He was, however, obliged to return home without attaining his object, after the greater part of the army had perished miserably, through heat and want of food and water.

A writer of that time, who was almost his contemporary,¹ says that when the provisions were exhausted, the unhappy soldiers fed as long as they could on herbs; but when all vegetation ceased in the desert, in their desperation they took refuge in an expedient which the pen shrinks from recording. The soldiers drew lots, and every tenth man who drew the fatal number was eaten.

Now they forced the king to return home; but as soon as they reached inhabited places, after the fashion of Asiatic slaves, they obeyed him blindly, in spite of his insanity.

When he entered Memphis, with the remains of his army, the Egyptians had found a new Apis, and, gorgeously dressed, were celebrating a great festival, in honour of the god, who had reappeared in the shape of the sacred bull.

As Cambyses had already heard at Thebes that the army which he had sent against the oasis of Ammon in the Libyan desert had perished miserably through the wind of the desert, and that the sailors of the fleet which he had sent to conquer Carthage had refused to fight against the men of their own race, the king thought the inhabitants of Memphis were keeping their festival to celebrate his unsuccessful campaigns. He summoned the chief men of the town, reproached them for their behaviour, and asked why they were so stubborn and gloomy after his victories, and showed such wild joy after his defeat. The Memphians explained the cause of their joy, and assured him that the appearance of the divine bull was always celebrated in Egypt with joyous festivals and processions. Cambyses called them liars, and condemned them to death. Then he summoned the priests, and received the same answer from them. Sneering and scoffing, he wished to become acquainted with the new deity, and ordered him to be brought. Apis was brought, and the king was told that he

¹ Herodotus visited Egypt about sixty years after Cambyses' death. Herod. iii. 25.

was conceived by a virgin cow, through a ray of moonlight, that he must be black, have a white triangle on his brow, the image of an eagle on his back, and a crescent on his side. On the tail, two kinds of hair must be found, and on the tongue an excrescence, resembling the sacred beetle.

When the divine bull stood before him and he could discover nothing exceptional in him, Cambyses became furious and plunged his sword into his side. When he saw the blood stream forth and the Apis fall, he laughed shrilly and cried: "You fools, your gods consist of flesh and blood and can be wounded. Such folly is worthy of you. But you shall see that I am not to be laughed at with impunity. Guards, scourge these priests, and kill every one whom you find keeping this mad festival."

His orders were obeyed, and the fury of the Egyptians was increased to the utmost.

When the Apis died of his wound, the inhabitants of Memphis buried him secretly in the tombs of the sacred bulls in the Serapeum, and then tried to revolt against the Persians, under Psamtik's command. The revolt was, however, soon suppressed, and cost the unhappy son of Amasis his life; his crimes and severity deserve to be forgotten, on account of his restless endeavours to free his people from a foreign yoke, and his death for freedom.

Cambyzes' madness had meanwhile assumed a new form. After the vain endeavour to restore Bartja, whom he thought changed to a bow, to his former shape, his irritation increased, so that a word or a look which displeased him, could make him rave.

His faithful counsellor, Croesus, did not leave him, although the king had several times given him to the guards for execution. They knew their master and, certain of impunity, were careful not to harm the old man, because on the following day Cambyzes had either forgotten his order or had long ago repented of it. Once, however, the unhappy whip-bearers were obliged to suffer cruelly for their forbearance, for though Cambyzes was pleased at his friend's safety, he punished the disobedience of his preservers with death.

We shrink from relating much of the barbarous cruelty

of the mad king in those days, but still we cannot omit several incidents which seem to us especially characteristic.

One day at the banquet, when intoxicated, he asked Prexaspes what the Persians said of him. The ambassador, who in his desire to silence his torturing conscience by noble deeds of a dangerous character, took advantage of every opportunity to influence the unhappy king for his good, answered that they praised him in every respect, but thought he was too much addicted to wine.

At these words, spoken half-jestingly, the madman raged and cried: "Do the Persians say that wine robs me of my senses? I will show them that they have forgotten how to judge me properly."

At these words he bent his bow, aimed for a minute and shot through the breast the eldest son of Prexaspes, the royal cup-bearer, who was waiting at the back of the hall for the king's signal. Then he gave orders that the unhappy youth should be opened; the arrow had pierced the centre of the heart. The insane tyrant rejoiced and cried, laughing: "Now, Prexaspes, you see that it is not I, but the Persians who have lost their senses. Who could aim better than I?"

Prexaspes looked on at the terrible scene pale and motionless as the stone Niobe by the Sipylus. His slavish soul bowed before the omnipotent king, and did not force the dagger of vengeance into his hand. When the madman repeated his question, he pressed his hand on his heart and murmured: "No one could aim better."

A few weeks later the king went to Sais. When he was shown the apartments of his former love, long forgotten thoughts revived with increased force, and his dulled memory reminded him at the same time that Amasis had deceived him and her. Without being able to account for all the details, he cursed the dead man, and was led, raging, to the temple of Neith, where Amasis' mummy reposed. He dragged the embalmed corpse of the king from the sarcophagus, had it beaten with rods, pricked with needles, and finally, in defiance of the religious laws of the Persians which esteem it a deadly sin to defile the pure fire with

corpses, he had it burnt. He condemned the body of Amasis' first wife, who reposed in her sarcophagus at Thebes, to the same fate.

On his return to Memphis he did not shrink from ill-treating his wife and sister, Atossa, with his own hand.

One day, he had arranged some games in which a dog was to fight a young lion. When the lion had overcome his opponent, another dog, the brother of the vanquished animal, broke loose from his chain, rushed at the lion, and conquered him with the help of the wounded dog.

This sight delighted Cambyses greatly, but it caused Cassandane and Atossa, who were obliged to be present by the king's command, to weep aloud.

The astonished tyrant asked the cause of their tears, and was answered by hot-tempered Atossa, that the brave animal who risked his life for his brother reminded her of Bartja, who had been killed unavenged, she would not say by whom.

These words aroused the fury and the slumbering conscience of the mad king to such a degree, that he struck the rash woman and would, perhaps, have killed her with his own hands if his mother had not caught his arm, and exposed herself to his furious blows.

The sacred face, and the voice of his mother sufficed to subdue his anger; her look, which fell on him, was so full of scathing anger and intense contempt, that he could not forget it, and the delusion awoke in his mind that he would be poisoned by the eyes of women. From that time, whenever he saw a woman, he started and hid himself behind his companions, till at last he ordered that all the women at the palace of Memphis, including his mother, were to be taken to Ecbatana. Araspes and Gyges received orders to accompany them to Persia.

The royal women arrived at Sais and dismounted at the palace of the Pharaohs. Cræsus accompanied them to this town. Cassandane had changed greatly during the last few years. Deep furrows caused by grief and sorrow lined her once beautiful face, but pain had not been able to bow her tall form.

Atossa, her daughter, had, on the contrary, become more

beautiful in spite of much sorrow. The wild girl had changed to a perfectly developed woman, the impetuous, obstinate child had become a spirited woman of strong will. The experience of life and three sad years spent at the side of her insane brother and husband had been excellent teachers of patience, but had not succeeded in turning her heart from her first love. Sappho's friendship had to compensate her to a certain extent for the loss of Darius.

The young Greek had become another being since the disappearance of her husband. She had long ago lost her rosy colour and her charming smile. Wonderfully beautiful, in spite of her pallor, her lowered lashes, and languid bearing, she was like Ariadne awaiting the return of Theseus. Longing and expectation were visible in the expression of her eyes and the tone of her voice, and in her composed bearing. When steps approached, when a door opened, or a man's voice was heard unexpectedly, she started, rose, and listened, and, once more disappointed, did not renounce her hope, but surrendered herself anew to longing, and thought and dreamed as she had loved to do formerly.

• It was only when she played with her child and tended her that she seemed herself again. Then her cheeks flushed, her eyes brightened, and she seemed to live again in the present, instead of in the past or future.

The child was everything to her. Bartja lived for her in the little girl; she could bestow all her affection on her without withdrawing it from her lost husband. With the child, the gods had given her an aim in life—a tie which again connected her with the world, the best part of which seemed to have been lost when her husband disappeared. Sometimes when she looked at the blue eyes of the pretty child, which were so like her father's, she thought: "Why is she not a boy? He would become more like him every day, and at last stand before me a second Bartja, if there could be another!"

These thoughts did not continue long, and generally ended in her embracing the child with increased tenderness, and reproaching herself as ungrateful and foolish.

One day Atossa, with the same thought in her mind, exclaimed: "O that Parmys were a boy! He would become

more like his father every day, and rule over Persia a second Cyrus."

Sappho smiled sadly as she agreed with her friend, and covered her child with kisses.

But Cassandane said: "Acknowledge the kindness of the gods, my daughter, in giving you a girl. If Parmys were a boy, your child would be taken from you as soon as he completed his sixth year, to be educated with the children of the other Achæmenidæ, while the girl will be yours for a long time."

Sappho trembled at the mere thought of parting from her child, pressed the fair, curly head to her breast, and from that time had no fault to find with her precious treasure.

Atossa's friendship soothed the aching heart of the young widow. With her she could speak of Bartja as often and as long as she liked, and she was always certain of a kind, sympathetic listener, for Atossa had loved her lost brother dearly. But even a stranger would have liked to hear Sappho's story, for often her words assumed a rhythmical form. It seemed as though the memory of the springtime of her happiness put into words made her a divinely gifted poet. When she seized her lyre, and sang with her beautiful, pure, mournful voice, the passionate songs of yearning of the Lesbian swan, in which she found her own feelings expressed, then she thought that she sat with her love in the silent night, beneath the scented jessamine, and, carried away from reality into the enchanted land of fancy, she forgot the sad present; every time she laid down the lyre, and with a deep sigh returned from the land of dreams, Cassandane, though she could not understand Greek, wiped away a tear, and Atossa bent down to kiss her brow.

Three years had passed like this, during which she seldom saw her grandmother, for by Cambyzes' command, for Parmys' sake, she was never allowed to leave the harem without the leave and the escort of Cassandane or the eunuchs.

Now Cræsus, who still loved her as a daughter, had summoned Rhodopis to Sais. Sappho could not leave without bidding farewell to her best friend, and Cas-

sandane and the old Lydian fully agreed with her. Cyrus' widow had heard so much of the noble grandmother of her daughter-in-law that she wished to know her, and sent for her after Sappho had welcomed her affectionately.

When the two women stood face to face, no stranger could have known which was the queen; he would have thought that both were born to rule. Cræsus, who was equally attached to the Persian and the Greek, undertook the office of interpreter, and assisted by the pliant mind of Rhodopis, he managed to sustain the conversation.

After Rhodopis had, with her peculiar power of fascination, won Cassandane's heart, the queen, in accordance with Persian custom, thought she could not show her satisfaction better than by asking her to express a wish.

Rhodopis hesitated a minute before she cried, raising her hands as though in prayer: "Leave me Sappho, the comfort and joy of my old age."

Cassandane smiled sadly, and returned: "I cannot grant this request, for our law commands that the children of the Achæmenidæ shall be educated at the king's gate. I may not give up little Parnys, Cyrus' only grandchild; and much as she loves you, Sappho would never leave her child. Besides, she is so dear to me and my daughter that, though I understand your yearning, I can never let her go."

When Cassandane saw the eyes of the Greek fill with tears, she said: "But I know a remedy. Leave Naucratis, and come to Persia with us. There you shall spend your last days with your grandchild, and be cared for like a queen."

Rhodopis shook her beautiful grey head, and returned, in a subdued voice: "I thank you for your gracious invitation, great queen, but I feel that I cannot accept it. All the fibres of my heart are rooted in Greece, and they would break if I left it for ever. I am used to constant activity and stirring exchange of thought, and unrestrained liberty. I should pine and die in the restraint of the harem. Cræsus prepared me for your kind plan, and I underwent a severe struggle before I could convince myself that it was my duty to sacrifice what I loved most for what was best for me. It is so much harder to live a good

and beautiful than a happy life, that it is all the more honourable and more worthy of the name of Greek to follow duty instead of happiness. My heart longs for Persia and Sappho, my mind and experience belong to Greece. If you hear some day that the people alone rule in Greece, and that the nation bows only to its gods and its laws, to what is good and beautiful, you will know that the task to which Rhodopis and the best Greeks dedicated their lives is accomplished. Do not be angry with the Greek who, let me confess it, would rather die of longing, a free beggar, than live as a queen, who is called happy, but who is a slave."

Cassandane listened with surprise to Rhodopis, and understood her only in part, but she felt that she had spoken nobly, and at the end of her speech gave her hand to kiss. Then, after a short pause, she said: "Do as you think right, and rest assured that as long as I and my daughter live, your grandchild shall not want for true love."

"Your noble face and the renown of your virtues, assure me of that," answered Rhodopis.

"As well as my duty to make good as far as I can the wrong done to your grandchild."

The queen sighed sadly, and continued: "All possible care shall be paid to little Parmys' education. She seems richly endowed by nature, and already sings after her mother the songs of her home. I do not object to her love of music, although in Persia the art is only cultivated by low-born people, or for divine service.

Rhodopis grew excited at her words, and said: "Will you allow me to speak plainly, O queen?"

"Speak fearlessly."

"When you sighed at the thought of the excellent son you have lost, I thought, perhaps, the noble young hero would still be living if the Persians knew how to bring up their sons better, perhaps I should say gave them a more varied education. Bartja told me what Persian boys are taught. To shoot with the bow, to throw the spear, to ride, to hunt, to speak the truth, and perhaps to distinguish between useful and noxious plants, that is all that is thought necessary to prepare them for life. Our Greek

boys are also physically exercised and strengthened, for health is merely repaired by the physician, but it is gained in the gymnasium. If a Greek youth by constant training became stronger than a bull, more truthful than a god, and wiser than the most learned Egyptian priest, we should still shrug our shoulders when we looked at him, if he wanted what can only be given by good example and the careful cultivation of music combined with gymnastics: grace and moderation. You smile because you do not understand me, but you will agree with me, when I show you that music, for which, according to Sappho's account, you seem to care, is as important in education as gymnastics. Both, strange as this may sound, have an equal influence in perfecting body and soul. He who devotes himself solely to music, will at first, it is true, become soft and flexible like iron in the furnace, if he was wild, and moderate his harsh, coarse manners, but finally his courage will vanish; instead of being violent, he will become irritable in small things and useless as a warrior, thus neglecting the chief aim of you Persians. He who only attends to gymnastics will, it is true, combine strength and manliness like Cambyses, but his soul—here I cease to compare—will remain dull and blunt, and his feelings will want purity. He will be deaf to calm reason, and, like a tiger, seek to effect everything by unbridled violence. His life, deficient probably in grace and moderation, will become rude and violent. Therefore music alone is not good for the soul, nor gymnastics alone for the body, but both combined, strengthen the body, elevate and calm the soul and bestow manly grace and graceful manliness on the whole character.”¹

Rhodopis was silent for a minute but soon continued: “He who has not received such an education and who from his childhood is allowed to exhibit his roughness with impunity where and when he likes, he who always hears flattery, but never well merited reproach, he who may command before he has learnt to obey, and is brought up on the principle that splendour, power and wealth are the highest

¹ This speech is based on Plato's Republic.

goods, can never obtain that true, noble manliness which we ask of the gods for our sons. If such an unhappy being is born with a hot temper and a sensual mind, his violence will be increased by bodily exercise without the softening influence of music, and the child who perhaps came into the world with good qualities, will, owing to his education, become a wild animal, a drunkard, who destroys himself by insane fury."

The Greek stopped. When her gaze met Cassandane's eyes, wet with tears, she felt she had gone too far, and had wounded the noble heart of a mother. She seized Cassandane's garment, kissed the hem, and said softly: "Pardon me!"

Cassandane nodded assent, saluted the Greek and prepared to leave the room. On the threshold she stopped, and said: "I am not angry, for your reproaches are just. But do you, too, try to forgive, for I can assure you that he who destroyed the happiness of your child and mine, is, it is true, the mightiest, but also the most unhappy of mortals. Farewell, and if you desire anything, remember the widow of Cyrus, who would like to show you that among other things Persians are taught magnanimity and generosity."

With these words Cassandane left the room.

The same day Rhodopis received news that Phanes, after spending his time at Croton, near his friend Pythagoras, in grave meditation, and languishing from the effects of his wound, had died a few months ago with the calmness of a philosopher.

Rhodopis was deeply moved at the news and said to Cræsus: "In Phanes, Greece loses one of her best sons, but many like him live and are growing up. I do not fear the ever increasing power of the Persians. I believe that my home with its many heads will, when the wild desire for conquest threatens her, become a giant with one head and divine strength, who will vanquish brute force as surely as the spirit rules the body.

Three days later Sappho took a last farewell of her grandmother and followed the queens to Persia, where in spite of subsequent events, she always believed in Bartja's

possible return, and full of love, hope, and faithful remembrance, devoted herself entirely to the education of her daughter and the care of aged Cassandane.

Little Parmys grew up in rare beauty. Next to the gods she learned to love nothing so deeply as the memory of her vanished father, who became a living man to her, through her mother's words. Atossa, in spite of the great happiness, which was soon to dawn upon her, preserved her former friendship for Sappho, and always called her by the name of sister. In the summer Sappho inhabited the hanging gardens at Babylon, and there in conversation with Cassandane and Atossa she often remembered the beautiful, innocent cause of events which had proved so momentous for mighty realms, *the Egyptian princess*.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DEATH OF CAMBYSES.

WE might end our story here did we not think it necessary to give our readers an account of the physical end of the king, who had long ago perished intellectually, and of the fate of some of the minor characters of our story.

A short time after the departure of the queen, news came to Naucratis that Oroetes, satrap of Lydia, had enticed his old foe, Polycrates, to Sardes, and there crucified him. Thus the tragic end which Amasis had prophesied for the tyrant, came to pass. The satrap had boldly committed the deed without the king's consent, because changes had taken place in the Median realm, which threatened to cause the downfall of the house of the Achæmenidæ.

The long sojourn of the king in a distant country had lessened or destroyed the fear, with which, in former times, his mere name inspired those who felt inclined to rebel. The news of his insanity withdrew from him the reverence of his subjects, while the intelligence that from mere arrogance he had sent thousands of his people to certain death in the Ethiopian and Libyan deserts, filled the hot-blooded Asiatics with a hatred which was fostered and encouraged by the powerful magi, and which induced first the Medes and the Assyrians and then the Persians, to break out in open rebellion.

The governor appointed by Cambyses, the ambitious chief priest, Orpastes, placed himself at the head of this rebellion from selfish motives, flattered the people by remitting taxes, by great gifts and still greater promises, and

atlast tried to gain possession of the Persian throne for his family by fraud when he saw with what gratitude his kindness was recognised.

He remembered the wonderful resemblance between his brother, Gaumata, whose ears had been cut off, and Bartja, the son of Cyrus, and resolved, as soon as he heard of the disappearance of the youth who was so much beloved by the Persians, to pretend that Gaumata was the murdered man, and to seat him on the throne in Cambyses' place. The hatred felt for the mad king in his whole realm, and the great love which was felt for Bartja, rendered this easy.

When numerous messengers of Oropastes went through the provinces and announced to the discontented citizens that the younger son of Cyrus was still alive in spite of rumours to the contrary, that he had quarrelled with his brother, ascended his father's throne, and granted all his subjects exemption from military service, and from all taxes for three years, the new ruler was acknowledged with loud acclamations in the whole kingdom.

The false Bartja had obeyed his brother, the chief priest, to whose superior intellect he submitted readily, had taken possession of the palace of Nisæa in the Median plain, placed the crown on his head, declared the king's harem his, and shown himself from afar to the people who were to recognise in his face the features of the murdered man. Afterwards, to prevent discovery, he kept himself concealed in the palace, and in accordance with the custom of Asiatic rulers, gave himself up to all sensual pleasures, while his brother held the sceptre with firm hand, and gave all important offices to his friends and companions, the magi.

As soon as he felt secure he sent the eunuch Ixabates to Egypt to inform the army of the change of rulers, to persuade it to revolt from Cambyses and to side with Bartja, who, as we know, was adored above all by the soldiers.

The well-chosen messenger carried out his commission skilfully, and had already won a large number of soldiers for the new king, when he was captured by some Syrians in the hope of a reward, and brought to Memphis.

On his arrival at the town of the Pyramids, he was

taken to the king, who promised that he should not be punished if he would tell the whole truth.

The envoy now confirmed the news, which had only reached Egypt as a rumour, namely, that Bartja had ascended the throne of Cyrus, and was already acknowledged by the greater part of the kingdom. Cambyses was as startled at the news as a man who sees the dead rise from their graves. In spite of his clouded intellect, he knew that he had ordered Prexaspes to murder Bartja, and that the former asserted that he had obeyed his command. He suspected that his ambassador had deceived him, and spared the young man's life. He at once expressed this sudden thought, reproached Prexaspes bitterly for his treachery, and forced him to swear most solemnly that the unhappy Bartja had fallen by his hand and been buried by him.

Oropastes' envoy was now asked if he himself had ever seen the new king. He answered no, and added that the reputed brother of Cambyses had only left his palace once in order to show himself to the people from a distance. Prexaspes now saw through the tissue of falsehoods spun by the chief priest, and reminded the king of the fatal mistake which had been caused by the wonderful resemblance of Bartja and Gaumata and finally staked his head if his explanation should prove false. The insane king was pleased with this, and henceforth was haunted by the idea of capturing and slaying the magi.

The army was ordered to prepare for the march. Aryandes, one of the Achæmenidæ, was appointed satrap of Egypt, and the army started for Persia without delay. Urged on by his new mania, the king took no rest and turned night into day till in Syria, his horse, ill-treated by the impetuous rider, fell, and he was unfortunately wounded severely by his own dagger.

After he had lain unconscious for many days, he opened his eyes and asked to see first Araspes, then his mother, and finally Atossa, although all three had left many months ago. His words proved that he had spent the last three years from the outbreak of the fever till he received his wound as in a dream. All that he was told about that time seemed new to him, and filled his heart with grief. He

was fully conscious of nothing but his brother's death. He knew that Prexaspes had murdered him by his orders and had told him that Bartja lay buried on the shores of the Red Sea. During the night that followed his awakening it became clear to him that for a long time he had been mad. Towards morning he fell into a deep sleep which restored his strength so much that he was able to summon Cræsus, and order him to give a detailed account of what he had done during the last years.

His grey-haired counsellor obeyed the king's command, and concealed none of his acts of violence, though he could scarcely hope to lead back to the right path the man who had been confided to his care.

His joy was, therefore, great when he saw that his words made a deep impression on the newly awakened mind of the king. With tears in his eyes, Cambyzes lamented his crimes and his madness, begged pardon of Cræsus with the shamefacedness of a child, thanked him for his faithful patience, and finally begged him to ask forgiveness in his name, particularly of Cassandane and Sappho, but also of Atossa and all whom he had unjustly injured.

The grey-haired Lydian shed tears of joy at these words, and was unwearied in assuring the sick monarch that he would recover, and find ample opportunity of atoning for the past by nobler deeds. Cambyzes shook his head decidedly, and begged the old man to have him carried into the open air, his couch placed on an elevated site, and to summon the Achæmenidæ to assemble round him. When, in spite of the opposition of the physicians, his orders were obeyed, he had himself placed in an upright position, and said with a voice, audible a long way off: "It is now time, Persians, to reveal to you my greatest secret. Deceived by a dream, irritated and offended by my brother, I had him murdered in my anger. Prexaspes committed the crime at my command; but, instead of its bringing me the repose I desired, it brought me madness, and a torturing death. This confession must convince you that my brother Bartja is no longer among the living. The magi have taken possession of the throne of the Achæmenidæ. At their head are Oropastes, whom I left behind as governor of Persia, and his brother Gaumata, who is so like Bartja that Cræsus,

Intaphernes, and my uncle, noble Hystapes, all mistook him on one occasion for the murdered man. Woe to me that I murdered him, who, as my relative, should have avenged the insult the magi have put upon me! But I cannot awaken him from the dead, and therefore I appoint you the executors of my last will. By the Feruer of my dead father, in the name of all pure and good spirits, I charge you, do not let the government fall into the hands of the treacherous magi. If they have seized the crown by craft, seek to deprive them of it by craft; if they took the sceptre by force, recover it in the same way. If you obey my last will, the earth shall bring forth her increase for you, and your flocks and your wives shall be fruitful, and freedom shall be your lot for ever; but if you do not strive to regain the power, then the contrary shall be your fate. Yea, then all of you, then every Persian shall perish as I do."¹

When the Achæmenidæ saw the king weep, and sink back exhausted, after he had spoken these words, they rent their garments, and uttered a cry of woe.

A few hours later Cambyses died in Croesus' arms. In his last hour he thought of Nitetis, and died with her name on his lips, and tears of repentance in his eyes.

When the Persians had left the impure body of the dead, Croesus knelt before him, and, raising his hands to heaven, cried: "Great Cyrus, I have kept my oath, and stayed with this unhappy man, as a faithful counsellor, till the end."

On the following morning, the old man, accompanied by his son, went to his town, Barene, and lived there for many years, a father to his subjects, greatly honoured by Darius and praised by all his contemporaries.

After Cambyses' death, the heads of the seven Persian clans consulted together, and resolved first of all to satisfy themselves as to the person of the usurper. Otanes, therefore, sent a faithful eunuch secretly to his daughter, Phædime, who was known to be in the possession of the

¹ Herod., iii. 65. The sentimental remorse of Cambyses is specially mentioned.

new king, with the whole harem of Cambyzes, which had been left at Nisæa. Before the messenger returned, the greater part of the army had dispersed, for the soldiers eagerly seized the favourable opportunity of returning home to their families after years of absence.

At length the long-expected messenger returned, and informed Otanes that Phædime had only once been visited by the new king; but, notwithstanding the risk she ran, she had taken advantage of his sleep to convince herself that his ears were really missing. Even without this discovery she was in a position to prove that the usurper, who was really remarkably like the murdered Bartja, was none other than Gaumata, the brother of Oropastes. Her old friend Boges was again chief eunuch, and had initiated her into the secret of the magi. The chief priest had found the guardian of the women a beggar in the streets of Susa, and with the words: "You have forfeited your life, it is true, but I need people like you," restored him to his former position. Finally, Phædime implored her father to do all that was in his power to overthrow the magus, who treated her with great contempt. She declared that she was the most wretched of women.

Although none of the Achæmenidæ believed for a moment that Bartja was still living, and had actually seized the throne, they were nevertheless glad that Phædime had given them certain news as to who the usurper really was, and resolved to go to Nisæa without delay with the rest of the army, and to overthrow the magi by force and stratagem. When they entered the new capital unopposed, and saw that the greater part of the people was satisfied with the new rule, they pretended to believe in the identity of the king with the younger son of Cyrus, and to be ready to do homage to him.

The magi were not deceived, they remained in the palace in strict seclusion, assembled an army in the plains of Nisaja by promises of great rewards, and did all in their power to strengthen the belief in Gaumata. No one was able to do more harm to their cause or, under the circumstances, to further it better, than Prexaspes, for he was greatly respected by all the Persians, and was therefore able to blunt the force of the rumour respecting Bartja's actual

death, which spread more and more, by declaring that he had not murdered him. Oropastes, therefore, sent for the ambassador, who was avoided by all his companions since the king's last words, and was living the life of a proscribed man. He promised him a great reward if he would ascend a tower, and tell the people assembled in the court that wicked men called him Bartja's murderer, while, with his own eyes, he had seen the new king, and recognized in him Cyrus' younger son. Prexaspès agreed without opposition, took an affectionate leave of his family, while the people assembled in the palace court uttered a short prayer to the gods by the sacred altar of fire, and went with proud bearing to the palace. On the way he met the heads of the seven clans; and when he saw that they avoided him, he cried: "I deserve your contempt, but I will try to obtain your forgiveness."

When Darius turned towards him, he hastened to him, seized his hand, and said: "I loved you as a son. If I should die, care for my children, and use your pinions, winged Darius! Then he proudly ascended the tower. Many thousands of the citizens of Nisæa heard him, when he cried with loud voice: "You all know that the kings, who ruled till now and gained for you glory and honour, belonged to the dynasty of the Achæmenidæ; Cyrus ruled over you like a just father, Cambyses like a severe ruler, and Bartja would have guided you like a bridegroom, if he had not fallen by this hand, which I show you, on the shores of the Red Sea. This shameful deed, by Mithra, I committed it with bleeding heart, as a faithful servant, in obedience to the command of my lord and king. But neither by day nor by night can I find rest, and like a hunted animal, I have been driven and terrified for four long years by the spirits of darkness, who chase sleep from the couch of the murderer. Now, I have resolved to end this life of torment and despair with a worthy deed, and though I find no mercy on the bridge Chinvat, at least I shall deserve once more the name of a good man, a name which I have stained. Know then that the man who pretends to be the son of Cyrus, sent me to this tower and promised me great rewards, if I would deceive you and assure you that he is Bartja the

Achæmenide. But I laugh his promises to scorn, and swear with the holiest oath I know, by Mithra and the Feruer of the dead kings, that he who rules you is no other than the priest, Gaumata, who was deprived of his ears, the brother of Oropastes, chief priest and governor, whom you all know. If you wish to forget the fame you owe to the Achæmenidæ, if you wish to unite ingratitude and humiliation, then acknowledge these miserable men and call them your kings, but if you despise a lie, and are ashamed of obeying unworthy deceivers, then drive away the magi before Mithra leaves heaven; choose the noblest of the Achæmenidæ, who promises to be a second Cyrus, Darius, the great son of Hystaspes, to be your king. That you may believe my words and not suspect that Darius sent me hither to win you for him, I will now commit a deed which will destroy every doubt, and convince you that truth and the honour of the Achæmenidæ are more to me than my life. May you be blessed if you follow my advice, cursed if you do not again seize the government and avenge yourself on the magi. Behold, I die a true and honest man."

With these words he mounted the highest battlement of the tower, flung himself down headlong and died, atoning by a noble death for the sole crime of his life.

The people, who had listened in perfect silence to his words, now broke out in a loud cry of fury and rage, burst open the palace gates, and were about to rush into the interior with the cry "Down with the Magi," when the seven chiefs stopped the furious crowd.

The citizens shouted with joy when they saw them, and cried more impetuously than ever: "Victory to King Darius."

The son of Hystaspes, borne aloft by the crowd, placed himself in an elevated position, and told the people that the Achæmenidæ had just slain the magi as liars and usurpers of the throne. Renewed shouts answered his words. When the bleeding heads of Oropastes and Gaumata were shown to the crowd the howling mob rushed through the streets and killed every magus

whom they met. Night alone put a stop to the horrible massacre.

Four days later, the son of Hystaspes was chosen king by the chief Achæmenidæ, on account of his rank and merits, and was acknowledged by the Persians with great joy.

Darius had killed the magus Gaumata with his own hand, while Megabyzus, father of Zopyrus, stabbed the chief priest. During Prexaspes' address to the people, the seven conspirators, Otanes, Intaphernes, Gobryas, Megabyzus, Aspatines, Hydarnes and Darius, who represented his aged father Hystaspes, entered a door of the palace which was not properly guarded, soon discovered where the magi were assembled, and as they knew the interior arrangements of the palace, and most of the guards were occupied with watching the people who were listening to Prexaspes, they reached the apartments where the magi were waiting, without any delay. Here a few eunuchs, among them Boges, opposed them, but in spite of their attempted resistance, the conspirators slew them. Boges died by the hand of Darius, who recognised him and attacked him with increased fury. The magi, alarmed by the cries of the dying eunuchs, rushed out and defended themselves when they saw what had happened. Oropastes snatched a lance from Boges as he fell, put out Intaphernes' eye and wounded Aspatines in the leg but was stabbed by Megabyzus. Gaumata fled to the next room and was about to bolt the door, when Darius and Gobryas rushed in after him. The latter seized the magus, threw him down, and kneeling on him, kept him on the ground. Darius stood in the darkened room hesitating, for he feared if he struck he should wound Gobryas, who exclaimed when he understood this: "Strike, though you pierce us both." Then Darius made a thrust with his dagger and, fortunately wounded only the magus.

Thus ended Oropastes, the chief priest, and Gaumata, who is better known as the false Smerdis.

A few weeks after the election of Darius, which the people said was brought about by wonderful divine signs, and the cunning of a groom, the son of Hystaspes celebrated at

Pasargada a splendid festival in honour of his coronation and a still more splendid festival in honour of his marriage with his beloved Atossa,¹ the daughter of Cyrus. The young wife, matured by her sad fate, remained the faithful, loved and honoured companion of her husband, to the end of his famous, active life. Darius became, as Prexaspes had foretold, a king whose deeds were well calculated to gain for him the titles of a second Cyrus and the Great.

He was a brave, prudent general, and was able to rule his great kingdom so excellently that he must be considered one of the greatest organizers of all countries and times. His weak successors owed it to him alone, that the enormous realm was able to exist two centuries longer. He was generous with his treasures, and careful of the possessions of his subjects; he was able to bestow truly regal gifts without demanding more than was his due. Instead of extorting money, as had been done by Cyrus and Cambyzes, he introduced a regular system of taxation, and neither obstacles, nor the scorn of the Achæmenidæ, deterred him from introducing what he considered right, though he was called "a trader," because of his financial measures, which seemed petty to men who were exclusively devoted to martial enterprise. Not the least important of his measures, was the introduction of a uniform coinage into his kingdom and thus into half the then known world.

He respected the customs and religion of every nation, and permitted the Jews to continue to rebuild their temple, after they had discovered in the archives of Ecbatana the document of Cyrus of which Cambyzes had been ignorant. He allowed the Ionian cities to rule their communities independently, and he would scarcely have sent his armies against Greece if he had not been insulted, especially by the Athenians.

Among other things he had learnt political economy from the Egyptians. He therefore showed particular respect to this nation and bestowed many benefits on them ;

¹ Atossa is repeatedly called Darius's favourite wife; and her son Xerxes was appointed heir to the throne, though Darius had three older sons by the daughter of Gobryas.

for instance, he connected the Nile with the Red Sea, by means of a canal, in order to increase Egyptian trade.

During his whole reign he tried to make up by kindness for the severity with which Cambyses had treated the Egyptians, and in later years he still liked to occupy himself with the intellectual treasures of that wise people, with whose manners and customs no one was allowed to interfere during his lifetime. The aged chief priest, Neithotep, who had been his teacher, enjoyed the favour of the king to the end, and the latter often made use of the remarkable astrological knowledge of the old philosopher.

The Egyptians acknowledged the kindness of the new ruler, and called Darius a deity, like their former kings, but in the last years of his life they forgot their gratitude, and, yielding to their desire for independence, tried to throw off the mild yoke which galled them, because it was imposed without their consent.

Their noble lord and protector was not to see the end of these struggles. It was reserved for Xerxes, the successor and son of Darius, to lead the inhabitants of the Nile Valley back to an enforced, and therefore impossible obedience.

Darius erected a splendid palace on Mount Rachmed, near Persepolis, as a worthy monument of his greatness; its ruins still arouse the astonishment and admiration of travellers. Six thousand Egyptians, who had been taken to Persia by Cambyses, helped in the work and assisted the workmen who were commissioned to build a royal tomb for Darius and his descendants. The rocky chambers, difficult of access, have defied time, and still serve as dwellings for innumerable wild pigeons. On a wall of the smooth rock of Bisitun or Behistân, not far from the spot where he saved Atossa's life, Darius had the history of his deeds carved in Persian, Median and Assyrian. The Assyrian and Persian portions of the inscriptions have been deciphered accurately. An account of the events described in our last chapters is found there, which agrees on the whole with that of Herodotus. The Persian text says: "Darius the King said: That which I did, was done by the grace of Auramazda. After the kings became rebellious, I fought nineteen battles. I defeated them

with Auramazda's help. Nine kings I made captive. One was named Gaumata; he was a Mede, and he lied when he said: 'I am Bardiya (Bartja) son of Cyrus.' He made Persia revolt."

Further on he names the chiefs who helped him to overthrow the magi, and in another passage he says: "Darius the King says: What I did I performed in every way with Auramazda's help. Auramazda brought me help, and the other gods who exist, because I was not an enemy, a liar, or a despot, neither I nor my family. He who helped my race, him have I favoured, he who was hostile, him have I punished severely. You who will be King after me, be not friendly with a man who is a liar or a rebel, punish him with a severe punishment. Thus says Darius the King. You who see the writings I have written or these pictures, destroy them not, but preserve them as long as you live," &c.

We have only to record that Zopyrus, the son of Megabyzus, remained Darius' faithful friend till his death.

One day a courtier showed the king a pomegranate and asked him: "What happiness would you like to possess as many times as this fruit has seeds." Darius answered, without a moment's hesitation: "Zopyrus."

He was able to repay the affection of his royal friend. During nine months Darius had in vain besieged Babylon, which had revolted from the Persians after Cambyzes' death. One day, when the siege was about to be raised, Zopyrus appeared before the king, bleeding, and without nose or ears. He told him that he had mutilated himself in order to deceive the Babylonians, who must know him well since he had once been very friendly with their daughters. He would convince the insolent citizens that Darius had mutilated him, and that he had come to avenge himself on the king with their help. They would give him the troops with whom he intended to make a few successful sallies in order to gain the confidence of the town. Finally he would obtain the keys, and open the gates of Semiramis to his friends.

These words, spoken in a jesting tone, and the sad condition of his once handsome friend, moved the king to tears. When, by means of Zopyrus' stratagem, the almost in-

pregnable fortress was really taken, he exclaimed: "I would give a hundred Babylons if Zopyrus had not mutilated himself."

He appointed his friend governor of the huge city, gave him all the revenues, and annually bestowed on him rare gifts. In later days he was accustomed to say that, with the exception of Cyrus, with whom no man could be compared, no one had ever done so noble a deed as Zopyrus.

Few rulers could boast of such self-sacrificing friends as Darius possessed, because few understood how to show gratitude as well as he.

When Syloson, brother of murdered Polycrates, came to Susa one day, and reminded him of the service he had done him, Darius received him as a friend, placed ships and soldiers at his disposal, and helped him to conquer the Samians.

The islanders offered a desperate resistance to the foreign troops of the new tyrant, and, when they were at last obliged to yield, said: "We have much space in the land for Syloson's sake."

Rhodopis lived to see the murder of Hipparchus by Harmodius and Aristogiton, and the fall of his brother Hippias, the tyrant of Athens. She died in the arms of her best friends, Theopompus the Milesian and Callias the Athenian, fully convinced of the high destiny of the Greeks. All Naucratis mourned the noble Greek, and Callias sent a messenger to Susa to inform the king and Sappho of the death of his friend.

A few months later the satrap of Egypt received the following letter from Darius:—

"As we knew and honoured Rhodopis the Greek, who died recently at Naucratis; as her grandchild is the widow of a legitimate heir to the Persian throne, and still enjoys the honour shown to a queen; as I have lately chosen Parmys, the great grandchild of the deceased, daughter of Bartja and Sappho, to be my third wife, it seems just that we should show royal honours to the mortal remains of the ancestress of two great queens. I therefore command that you bury with royal pomp the ashes of Rhodopis, whom we always considered the greatest and most remarkable of women, in the greatest and most remarkable of

monuments—that is, in the finest of the Pyramids. The ashes of the deceased are to be preserved in the precious urn which Sappho sends.

Given in
the New Palace at Persepolis,
DARIUS, SON OF HYSTASPEE,
KING."

THE END.

